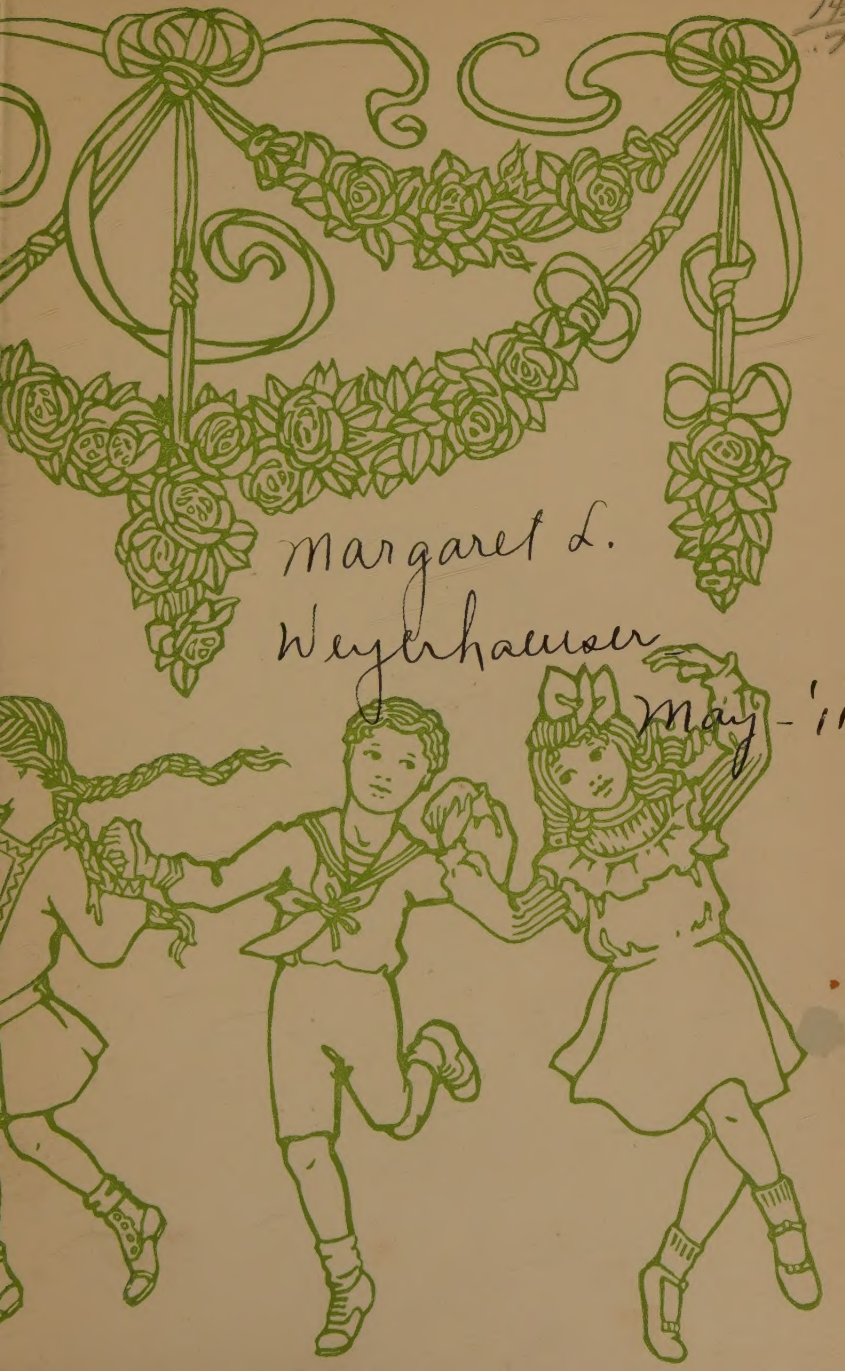
Mistress May

Amy E. Blanchard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MISTRESS MAY

MISTRESS MAY SAT UPON THE LOWEST STEP OF THE PORCH

MISTRESS MAY

by

AMY E. BLANCHARD

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CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	HER HOME	11
II.	HER NEIGHBORS	25
III.	HER PETS	43
VI.	HER PLAYS	61
V.	HER BROTHER	79
VI.	HER NAUGHTINESS	97
VII.	HER GOODNESS	115
VIII.	HER ILLNESS	135
IX.	HER SCHOOL-DAYS	155
X.	HER VISIT	175
XI.	HER TEACHER	193
XII.	HER HOLIDAYS	213

ILLUSTRATIONS

MISTRESS MAY SAT UPON THE LOWEST STEP OF THE PORCH . . . . . *Frontispiece*

SNAP HAD TO HAVE A GOOD WASHING . *Facing page* 58

MAY FOLLOWED HER TO THE QUEER BACK YARD . . . . . " " 110

"WE WILL START FOR CALIFORNIA AT ONCE" . . . . . " " 148

"SHE'S NOTHING BUT A SCHOOL-TEACHER, ANYWAY" . . . . . " " 196

HER HOME

Mistress May

CHAPTER I

Her Home

Mistress May sat upon the lowest step of the porch by the back door. Before her were a large, self-satisfied cat, and a small impertinent kitten; at her elbow was an alert and inquisitive fox-terrier, while at a short distance a pair of diminutive bantam chickens pecked industriously. The place was rather new to them all, for they had just been brought here from the city and were hardly accustomed to their strange quarters, although, without exception, they were pleased with them. Snap, the dog, because there was such a range of garden to run in; the cats, because it was pleasanter to lie in the sunshine on the porch or in the grass than to be shut up between four walls; the hen and rooster, because here were fine pickings,

and May, herself, because her pets liked it, and because her own playground was extended.

She was rather a romantic little soul and she had always been possessed with a longing to sit upon a doorstep and eat her supper from a bowl of bread and milk as did certain little girls in story-books; consequently, upon the first opportunity after her arrival in this new home, she had lost no time in carrying out her long-felt wish. She ate slowly with much satisfaction. Snap looked on with a pretended lack of interest in what she was doing, though all the time his mouth was watering and his eyes were eager. The mother cat kept her green eyes fixed upon her mistress, and the kitten every few moments opened its little pink mouth to give a subdued and long drawn mew. The hen and rooster were entirely content with their own pickings and did not ask for May's.

"I declare, children," said the little girl, "you act as if you had never had anything to eat, and you have all had your supper. There, greedies!" She threw two bits of the soaked bread upon the ground, and the two cats gobbled them up imme-

diately, while Snap, with his head to one side, looked on, putting a reminding paw upon his mistress' arm. "Biddy and Buff, you are the only well-behaved ones of all the lot," May went on; "See, you others, how they look out for themselves. Snap, where is that bone I saw you hide this morning? Go get that. Turn your green eyes some other way, Pinky, you stare at me so, you old stare cat you. I am not going to pay any more attention to you, so there."

She kept her eyes fixed on her bowl and began to murmer to herself:

"'And often after sunset, sir,
When it is light and fair,
I take my little porringer
And eat my supper there.'

No, I like the other one better:

'Thou knowest that twice a day I have brought thee in this can,
Fresh water from the brook as clear as ever ran,
And twice in the day when the ground is wet with dew
I bring thee draughts of milk, warm milk it is and new.'

If I wasn't so dreadfully afraid of the cow, I'd go and get some new milk now. I wish I had a

lamb; maybe papa will get me one. I'd love to say, 'Drink, pretty creature, drink,' to it."

She carefully finished her last drop of milk and ended by saying: "I really meant to give you kitties some of this, but I like the little crumbs in the bottom of the bowl, the best of all, so I can't let you have any. I'll go and get you a tiny bit more supper and then you'll be satisfied."

She took up her bowl and went into the house, followed by her dog and cats. The hen and rooster had concluded that it was time to go to roost and had taken themselves off.

The tiny bit of supper sufficed, it seemed, for Pinky took her kitten to a quiet corner and Snap went out to hunt for some new diversion. Then it was that a tired little girl went to find her mother and to rest her head in that haven of refuge, a comforting lap.

"Well, little girl," said her mother, "how has the day gone for you? Have your children been troublesome?"

"Yes, very," returned May. "Have yours?" She laughed a little as she asked.

"So—so," returned her mother, smiling.

"You see," May went on, "there is so much more room for them here and they wander away where I can't find them. Snap will go rooting around and gets himself so dreadful dirty, and Pinky will go sneaking after the birds; I had to give her a dousing twice to-day to stop her. Then Biddy and Buff will get under the fence into the next garden; they are so little, you know, that they can creep through almost anywhere."

"Then it would almost seem as if we had better have stayed in the city."

"No, indeed. Don't say such a thing, mamma. I wouldn't go back for anything."

"Well, you see I have the same trouble that you have. The baby trots off and gets into mud-puddles before I know it, and my other daughter gets under fences and down into hollows where she has no business to go, and my boy goes off where I can't find him, so you see my children are giving me lots of trouble."

May hid her face and said with a little laugh, that sounded as if tears were not very far from her eyes: "I won't get under the fence any more,

mamma; I'll climb over it, for it is so lovely in that hollow; you don't know how lovely it is."

"That's what Buff and Biddy think, no doubt, when they get away into pleasant places."

May laid her cheek against her mother's hand. "I see, mamma, and I won't go unless you say I may, for I understand that you worry over your children more than I do over mine."

"I don't mind your going if others are with you, but I don't like you to go alone."

"I wish I had a lamb," said May, turning the subject suddenly.

Her mother laughed. "What a sudden wish. Haven't you pets enough? You have just told me what a trouble those you have were to you."

"I have wanted a lamb for ever so long; ever since I learned about little 'Barbara Lewthwaite, a child of beauty rare.'"

Her mother laughed. "What a romantic little chick it is. Well, some day perhaps you can have a lamb, but now I must see that my little lambkin is safe in bed. You'd better go down and keep papa company till I come. He is in the library."

May ran down-stairs and entered the library

where her father sat reading the evening paper. He looked up and smiled. "Well, May Garland, did you just come from an apple-tree or a thorn-bush?"

May went up close to him and leaned against his shoulder. "There are May garlands everywhere now, aren't there, papa? I hope I haven't any thorns about me; I'd rather be made of apple-blossoms."

"And turn into a rosy-cheeked apple? I'd rather you would do that, for then you would be much more useful."

May looked thoughtful. "I suppose I do have prickly thorns sometimes. I came so near scratching Jack to-day," she told him solemnly.

"How was that?"

"He pinched the kitten's tail and made poor little Pat cry, and I would have pinched and scratched him back only Pinky scratched him for me, so I didn't have to."

Her father strove to hide a smile, but said gravely: "Even if he did wrong you shouldn't have wanted to do wrong, too, for two wrongs don't make a right."

"No, but I hate to see poor little animals hurt when they are so little and can't take care of themselves."

"In this case they seemed to be able to do so."

"All animals can't. Lambs can't, can they?"

"Why yes, to a certain extent; they can butt with their heads."

"Real hard?"

"When they are strong and big, they can butt pretty hard."

May considered this for a while, then she called: "Jack, Jack!"

Her little brother came in from the porch where he was swinging in the hammock.

"Jack," said May, going to meet him, "I want you to butt me with your head. I want to see how it feels."

Jack was nothing loath, and, before his sister was ready for him, over she went on the floor.

She picked herself up laughing. "That wasn't fair, Jack. I was not ready."

"You said butt, and I butted."

"I know, but I didn't mean that very minute."

"What did you want me to do it for, anyhow?"

"Because I wanted to see if it hurt very much to be butted. I don't think I'd mind it much. You know I have always wanted a lamb so much and papa said lambs can butt."

"Ho! I'd rather have a goat. What's the use of a lamb, anyhow?"

"They're so pretty."

"They're not a bit of use, and a goat can be hitched to a cart and can take you all around."

"Oh, but I shouldn't like that; I'd feel so sorry for the poor little goat. I don't believe goats like it. Papa, please don't get us a goat."

"My dear, I never in my wildest moments contemplated such a thing."

"But please, papa, I would like a lamb."

"And a rabbit, and a monkey, and a parrot, and a canary-bird"——

"No, no, I wouldn't like anything that had to be shut up in a cage."

"But why do you want a lamb?"

"They are so soft and woolly, and besides," she hung her head a trifle shyly, "I want to say 'Drink, pretty creature, drink,' to it."

Her father laughed heartily. "You are a sen-

timental little goose," he declared. "If that's all you want a lamb for I think you can get along without it. What have you children been doing to-day?"

"The cow came first thing this morning, you know, papa," said Jack, "and I helped Peter get her place in the stable ready, and what do you think, papa, May wouldn't eat her supper with us; she said she didn't want anything but bread and milk, and she would eat it out on the back porch."

"That is what little country girls always eat," May declared.

"This isn't real country."

"Well, it most is, and I wanted to see how it would feel to eat it out there."

"And how did you like it?" asked her father.

"Ever so much. It was so smell-sweety, and there were little birds flying into a tall chimney over there. They whirled around and dropped in one after another. I hope there wasn't any fire in the house below them to burn them up."

Her father laughed. "You are incorrigible, May. The little birds were swallows and they

have their nests in the chimney. They are called chimney-swifts, too."

"Oh, have they nests in there? Are they the kind: 'When the swallows homeward fly?'"

"Very likely they are the same. They are rather interesting little creatures. I used to watch them when I was a boy, many and many a time. They seem to know their own special places in the ranks and they circle round and round and get into position like a body of soldiers."

"Ho! I'm going to watch them," said Jack, at once interested.

"And so am I," May put in. "Do you believe there are any in our chimneys?" She glanced toward the fireplace as she spoke.

"No, I think not. This house is too new. The chimney where they went in is a very old one. The house belongs to a Mr. Atkinson, and I suppose the swallows have been living in that chimney for years and years."

"I'd like to see one of those soldier fellows close, too," said Jack.

"I'd like to see down the chimney when they're

going in," May added. "How old is this house, papa?"

"Not more than a couple of years old. Mr. Dallas built it."

"Is that the name of the people who live next door?" May asked.

"Yes, and I hope you and the little girl who lives there will be good friends."

"Are there any boys?" spoke up Jack.

"No boys, only one little girl."

"But there are plenty of boys all about," said May, reassuringly, "and you can play with us, Jack, until you get acquainted. I'm glad we came here where we can play out, papa, for it is so much better than to be shut up in a city house. There is the dearest little place down on the other side of the garden, between here and the place where the swallows live? There is a little brook there and ever so many wild flowers. Jack and I found lots of violets there to-day, and it's just lovely."

"I wouldn't advise you to spend too much time there, for it is rather damp, and when you do go you must keep off the wet ground."

"We will put on rubbers, won't we, Jack? We

want to have a battle of Manila there to-morrow; Jack is getting the fleet and Admiral Dewey ready now. Oh, Jack, we must not forget that we are going to cut out soldiers this evening. We have a beautiful admiral, papa. Mamma gave him to us He was in a magazine."

"Of powder?" her father asked.

May looked puzzled, and Jack looked important. "Pshaw! I know what he means," said the latter. "That's where they store the gunpowder, isn't it papa? Girls are so stupid."

"They are not, either," May retorted. "I know lots of things that you don't. Is it where they store powder, papa?"

"Yes, a storehouse for powder is called a powder magazine."

"And if the admiral stays there he might get blown up. Hurry, hurry, Jack, let us get our admiral out before anything happens to him. We've got to get Aguinaldo, too, and a whole lot of Fillipinos. Come on, it will be bedtime before you can say Jack Robinson, and

we'll have to put off the attack till another day"

Roused to a sense of immediate action, Jack followed his sister's lead and they were soon busy over their newspapers and magazines.

HER NEIGHBORS

CHAPTER II

Her Neighbors

THE next day May and Jack betook themselves to the little hollow by the side of the garden. It was not an unsafe spot in spite of the small running brook which trickled through it, for the brook was shallow and the place was sufficiently near to the house to be seen from the upper windows; besides this, it was fenced in and a sign of warning to trespassers prevented any intrusion, so the children felt entirely to themselves.

The were in the midst of the most thrilling part of their battle of Manila, and Jack was exploding fire-crackers from a toy cannon when they heard a voice say: "See, Rock, isn't that fine?"

Both children looked up to see peeping over the fence a pretty fair-haired little girl and a boy somewhat older. They were both older than the Garland children who were somewhat abashed at sight of these witnesses to their play.

"What is it? Please tell us," said the strange little girl.

"It's Manila," answered Jack, looking down at his very primitive fleet anchored in a tiny cove, "and this is Dewey." He pointed to the large and imposing figure of his admiral towering loftily above the rest of the paper marines.

"Oh! Do you mind if we come over?"

Jack looked at May and the two looked at the smiling face on the other side of the fence. "No, I reckon not," said Jack.

"I am Dimple Dallas," the little girl informed them; "that is, most every one calls me Dimple, but I am Eleanor, really."

"Oh, I thought you lived the other side of us," May said.

"So we do, but we came over to Mr. Atkinson's this morning. You know he lives here and we came down in this direction. Mamma lets me come when Rock is with me, but she doesn't like me to go the other side away from home and toward the river. I know who you are. Papa told me all about you. Your name is May Garland and your brother is Jack, and there is a baby

named Rose Garland. I think you have the loveliest name: Garland. I wish my name was Garland; it sounds so beautiful, and I do want to see the baby."

May's face beamed. This appealed to her. Here was some one who could understand her little sentiments, and she looked up, all her soul in her dark eyes. "I think Eleanor is a lovely name, too, and I am very glad to have you come over to our battle," offering the entertainment in her best manner. "Our baby is named Rosalie," she added, "but we call her Rosy. She isn't a little baby, you know, for she is two years old, but she is a dear, and I'd just love to have you come and see her."

"This is my cousin, Rock Hardy," Eleanor said, "and he's an awfully nice boy. He can play anything."

"Except the trombone," Rock put in, gravely.

Eleanor gave him a soft little tap. "Gooseygander, you know I didn't mean music; I meant just play plays. Come on, Rock, and let's help to take Manila; we are reinforcements, aren't we?"

"Oh, yes, they are reinforcements," repeated

May. And the bombarding and fighting went on more furiously than ever till a chance shot from a wicked fire-cracker popped the lofty admiral into the water and he had to be fished out.

Jack looked at him ruefully. "Dewey wasn't wounded," he said.

"No, so he wasn't," Rock agreed. "We'll have to call him Cervera, you know he was fished out of the water, and we'll pretend that the battle of Manila is over and that this is the battle of Santiago; that rock over there will make a splendid Morro Castle."

The boys continued their play, but the girls concluded that one battle a day was enough for them, and they wandered off a short distance, and sat down on a rock to talk over matters more interesting to them.

"Is that your dear little pony that I saw yesterday?" May asked.

"Yes. Isn't he a darling? I've had him about a year, and I'll come and take you out to drive some day, if you would like to go."

"Oh, will you?" May clasped her hands in delight. "That will be lovely. I'd just love to go.

Tell me what that cunning little house in your yard is for. Jack says it is just a kind of work-house and I say it is for some of your pets."

"It isn't for either of those things," Eleanor replied, laughing. "It is my playhouse. My dolls live there. Do you like dolls?"

"Yes, pretty well. I like live things better. Oh, that reminds me; I forgot all about Pinky and Pat; I must go and get them. I'll be right back." She went off to where, under a tree, stood a small baby-carriage, about large enough for a good-sized doll; this she trundled over to where Eleanor sat. "They are all right," she announced, as she came up. "They have been fast asleep all this time; the fire-crackers didn't scare them a bit."

Eleanor peeped into the carriage expecting to see two dolls, when to her surprise she saw, snuggled up closely together, a cat and kitten clad in the clothes of two dolls. Their furry faces, from under the borders of their caps, looked very funny and Eleanor laughed heartily. "What funny dolls!"

May lifted one out gently and smoothed out the

long white frock it wore. "I like them," she said, "'cause they are alive, and they don't mind a bit being dressed up; I think they like it. See how good they are." She deposited the kitten on Eleanor's lap and took Pinky upon her own. They looked very helpless but seemed perfectly content. "I have a dog, too, that I sometimes dress up," May went on, "but he doesn't like it much, and I can't put clothes on Buff and Biddy." She laughed.

"Who are they?"

"My little bantams."

"Oh, yes, I saw them—" Eleanor paused.

"They got under the fence into your garden, I know." May looked distressed. "I am so sorry; they aren't obedient children, but papa has a man there to-day putting chicken wire all along so they can't get in."

"We didn't mind," Eleanor hastened to reassure her. "It was Sylvy who shooed them out."

"They will not do it again," May said. "Did you ever have a pet lamb?" she asked, after a pause.

"No, I don't believe that I would care for one."

"I want one awfully, but I don't believe papa will get me one. Do they cost very much?"

"I don't think they do. I'll tell you what we will do: we will go out to Mr. Snyder's; he is our butterman, and he is the nicest man. There are lots of lambs put there, and we will ask him all about them. Rock can drive us out. Mamma doesn't like me to go out in the country alone."

May drew a long sigh of satisfaction. Surely this was the nicest sort of neighbor to have.

The kitten by this time was beginning to get restless and so the two little girls decided to go up to the house, leaving the boys to follow when they had finished their game. "We're going to May's house," Eleanor informed Rock, "and when you have battered down Morro Castle you can come too, Rock."

"Oh, I'll bring him with me," said Jack. He felt very much flattered that a boy so much older than himself should be willing to play with him, and he wanted to have it known that he considered Rock his company.

Eleanor and May proceeded toward the house, wheeling the carriage before them. It was nearly

noon, and the sun was high overhead. The air was sweet with apple blossoms, and the trees were beginning to make quite a shade. "Don't you like it here?" Eleanor asked.

"Indeed I do," May replied. "I am so glad papa brought us here, and that we are your next-door neighbors."

"So am I," Eleanor returned, "yet I was very sorry papa fenced off this side of our place and built this house. I was so afraid somebody I didn't like might come here to live. I was afraid Cousin Ellen might."

"Who is she?"

"Oh, some one I am not fond of. She lives at the other end of town."

"I am glad we didn't go down that way; I like this end so much better; it seems more like the country, somehow, and that is such a lovely place of Mr. Atkinson's. I peep through the fence whenever I go by there, and wish I could go in."

"So you can. I'll take you. Mr. Atkinson is a particular friend of mine and he tells me to come there whenever I want, and I know he won't

mind my taking you. Are you going to school this year?"

"No, not till the fall. Papa said it was not worth while to begin so late, for it will only be two or three weeks before the summer holidays begin, and I have my lessons for a little while every day with mamma."

"I wish you had come a week sooner."

"Why?"

"Because you could have come to my May party. My cousin Florence was here and she was queen of May."

"Oh, how lovely."

"Yes, it was nice; it is too bad you couldn't have been here."

May thought so, too. "Where is your cousin now?" she asked.

"She has gone home. Her sister is going to be married the first of June and she couldn't stay."

They had reached the house by this time and sat down on the step of the porch to rest. Across in Eleanor's garden some one was singing lustily:

"I'm glad I'm in dis army,
Yes, I'm glad I'm in dis army,
Yes, I'm glad I'm in dis army,
And I'm batter for de school."

Eleanor rested her chin in her two hands and listened, laughing softly. "That's Bubbles," she told May. "She is our little colored girl and she always gets things in such a funny way. When she sings that thing she is singing now, Rock says he supposes she thinks she is singing about a game of base-ball, but I don't believe she thinks about it one way or the other. She sings things without caring for anything but the tune."

May was busily engaged in freeing the cats from their garments. "Here, you may go, Pinky, and you, Pat," she said, putting them down on the walk. "I've seen that little girl," she said. "Has she always lived with you?"

"Always, and I love her dearly. There she comes now. She is looking for me. I suppose mamma thinks it is time for me to come home. I am glad it is Saturday, though I like school pretty well. I hope you will go to our school next year. I wonder if your mother will let you come over and play with me this afternoon."

"In your playhouse?"

"Yes, if you choose; or anywhere."

"Will your cousin Rock be there?" May felt that she would rather he were not.

"Yes, but bring Jack and then the boys can play by themselves."

"Does Rock live here?"

"No, he is here for a visit; he came up to go to the May party."

"Is his father a soldier?"

"No he is a cotton-broker. What made you think he was a soldier?"

"Oh, because Rock seems to know so much about battles and such things."

"That is only because he is a boy. Will you come over?"

"If mamma will let me."

"All right. I will expect you. Come as soon as you can and bring your dolls. Maybe mamma will let us have a tea-party, not a real one with lots of things, but just crackers and milk, or maybe cake and lemonade. Sylvy always bakes on Saturday, so I think we can have cake. There, Bubbles is beckoning to me, so I must go." And she ran

off, leaving May to look after her. Presently, however, Eleanor stopped. "Don't forget to bring Jack, and I wish I had time to see the baby, but I will come again."

May nodded and went into the house to ask her mother's permission to make the visit. "She is such a dear little girl, mamma," she said, "and I know you will let me play with her."

"Certainly I will," her mother told her. "I am quite sure she is a nice little girl and I've not the slightest objection to your going over to play with her, but you must not stay too long, and you must ask Mrs. Dallas to allow Eleanor to come over and play with you."

"May Jack go, too?"

"Was he invited?"

"Yes, mamma, he was. He and Rock are coming now."

"Is that Rock?" Mrs. Garland asked. "Why he is twice as old as Jack. I am afraid he will be bored by a little boy like Jack tagging after him."

"Oh, no, he won't. They have been playing together all morning, and Eleanor said very particularly to bring him."

Mrs. Garland looked uncertain, but Rock himself asked if Jack couldn't come over that afternoon. "You see," Rock said, "Eleanor won't use Spice this afternoon, and if you don't object, Mrs. Garland, Jack and I can take a drive. Spice is as gentle as a kitten and Eleanor drives him all about, except out in the lonely country roads, so there is no danger."

Jack's eager eyes besought his mother's permission.

"If you are sure you will like to have Jack I shall be very glad to have him go with you," Mrs. Garland said, finally. "I am sure it will be a great pleasure to him."

Rock put his hand on the younger boy's shoulder. "All right, old fellow. I'll be on hand about three o'clock, and if you feel like coming over with your sister just come down to the stable and you will find me there."

May felt a little jealous that Jack should be the one to have the first drive, but she did not say anything except: "Eleanor is going to take me out some day."

She soon forgot the little feeling of envy, how-

ever, and with her two prettiest dolls in the carriage which the cats had occupied in the morning, she presented herself at Eleanor's playhouse soon after dinner. Rock had borne Jack off to the stable to harness up Spice while May waited at the door of the playhouse.

Presently Eleanor's smiling face appeared, and May was ushered into the pretty little room where Eleanor's books and playthings were. May thought she had never seen such a fascinating place and she was divided between her longing to look at the books and her desire to play with the dolls.

"This is my Rubina," Eleanor told her, holding up a large handsome doll, "and this is my dear little Ada. What are your dolls named?"

"Violetta, is the big one, and the other is Claribel."

"What sweet names," Eleanor declared. "Now you take whichever end of the room you want and make yourself at home. Bubbles will be here after while with the cakes and lemonade. She can make real good lemonade. Then we'll let the dolls have all they want and when we have had

the party we will look at the books. Don't you love the Jungle books?"

"I love anything about animals," May replied, "and I love poetry."

"Do you? I do, sometimes. I like things that make my blood run cold, like the Pied Piper and such things."

"I like about Barbara Lewthwaite, and, 'We are Seven,' and 'There's no dew left on the daisies and clover,' but I like stories, too."

"Then I'll tell you what we'll do: we'll have a —a sort of reading for the dolls and you can say the daisy and clover piece for them. We'll have it for the—the benefit of—let me see—for the benefit of Mr. Atkinson's swallows." Eleanor spoke very soberly.

May laughed. "Why, they don't need it."

"Maybe they do, and anyhow they would be very grateful if we were to have the pay in worms."

"Worms?"

"Yes, or anything like that. Of course they wouldn't want real money, so we can have make believe money and they can be make believe peo-

ple. They must be poor, you know, or so many of them wouldn't live in one big tenement house."

May was delighted with this fancy. She fairly beamed on Eleanor. "You are so nice," she said. "I like you and I want you for my dearest friend, but I'm not quite as old as you."

"Oh, that is no matter. Of course I can't have anyone come before Florence, for she is almost my sister, but you can come next."

May was very much pleased with this acceptance of her friendship, and for the next hour the dolls were vastly entertained, first by the choice selections given them and then by the dainties offered, and even if they had to eat by proxy they were so very attentive to the readings that we may suppose they heard, even if they did not say so.

HER PETS

CHAPTER III

Her Pets

It took a very few days for May and Eleanor to become good friends, and the very next Saturday the two little girls with Rock in attendance started for a drive out the country road which led to Mr. Snyder's. It was keen delight to May to watch the pretty little Shetland pony, which trotted along so briskly, shaking his shaggy mane and seeming to enjoy the outing as much as did the children. The woods were full of sweet odors and the orchards along the way were a mass of bloom.

Good Mrs. Snyder made them very welcome; she was very fond of Eleanor and made a great pet of her. "Lambs? You want to see lambs," she said. "Well you shall see 'em to your heart's content. We've as pretty a lot as anyone could wish, and young calves as well, not to mention chicks. You like all those things, sissy?" She smiled down at May. "So do I. Now let me see

how you like my doughnuts and then we'll go and look at the lambs."

Eleanor had tasted Mrs. Snyder's doughnuts before, and knew how good they were, and she nodded to May as much as to say: "You'll be glad you came when you taste those."

This treat was soon over for the children were hungry after their long drive and did not linger over their spicy twists. Then Mrs. Snyder led the way to the back of the house. Passing down a garden where green things were sprouting, where peas were a-bloom and strawberries were showing a little tinge of color, they went on to where upon a hillside they saw numbers of little lambs frisking about with their mothers, and bleating in so many different keys that it made the children laugh to hear them.

"Oh, how lovely they are!" cried May.

"Think so?" Mr. Snyder had come up. "Well, I can't say I admire 'em, awk'ard long-legged things. Look at that one now; it's about the awk'ardest crittur I ever did see."

"There's a little black one, two, of them," cried Eleanor. "Baa, baa, black sheep, have you any

wool?" She went up and held out her hand, but the lambs kicked up their heels and frolicked off.

"What's the matter with that tiny tottering one over there?" May asked, with much concern.

"That's rather a weakling," Mrs. Snyder told her. "Sometimes we have to raise them by hand, they are so puling; but it is a nuisance. In the spring I often have my hands full with motherless lambs, and weakly calves, and chicks that have come out when it was too cold for them."

"Oh, I should think it would be nice to have them in the house," said May.

"Maybe, but it's a lot of trouble. However, I don't grudge the poor things a little attention when I have time to give it, though they do soon get so tame that they are forever under foot."

"Suppose you take the children over into the next field, mother, and let 'em look at the calves," Mr. Snyder suggested.

May hung back. "Are there any cows there?" she asked, timidly.

"Bless you, no, and if there were they wouldn't hurt you. The cows are all off down in the lower pasture; they'll not come up till milking-time."

"And don't the calves stay with their mothers?"

"No, not now, at least these don't. We feed 'em and let 'em run with their mothers only a little."

"Then that's why they cry so." May looked at the pretty sleek-skinned, soft-eyed creatures with great sympathy.

Then they must visit the poultry-yard and see the fluffly chicks and the ducklings and the cunning, peeping turkeys. It was really a great day to May who loved all these things so dearly.

She drove home in a very happy frame of mind, loaded down with the various gifts Mrs. Snyder had bestowed: a pair of little chicks left motherless, a tiny turtle in a jar of water, a huge bunch of lilacs, a jar of honey and a box of doughnuts. Rock laughed as he handed all these things out, but he very obligingly helped May to carry in her possessions, and with beaming face she sought her mother.

Jack begged so hard for the turtle, to which he took a great fancy, that May let him have it, while the chickens were settled in an old box for the night. "I hope Buff and Biddy won't peck at

them," May said with concern as she left the little things softly peeping in a contented way under their covering.

"I expected you would bring back a lamb," Jack told her.

"There were ever so many there, and I should love dearly to have one. I think I will save up my money and buy one," she added, suddenly taking the resolve. "The very next time I see Mr. Snyder I will ask him what he will sell one for. He is going to bring us butter and eggs every week, you know."

True to her intention she waylaid Mr. Snyder when he next called.

"What do I ask for lambs? That depends. If they are clipped I don't get as much as if they are wooled. What do you want to know for?" he asked, busying himself in counting out eggs from a big basket. "What would you want one for?"

"Why, just for a pet."

"Thirty, and six are thirty-six. Well, let me see, I get anywhere from three or four dollars up to as high as seven, maybe, according to how

scarce they are and how heavy mine are. I suppose about five dollars just now is what they bring."

"Oh!" May's face fell. She was not allowed much pocket money and was a perfect little spendthrift, so it would be a long time before she could save that amount. "I am afraid the lamb would be a sheep before I could get that much," she said, dolefully.

Mr. Snyder laughed. "That's the tune, is it? Well, now, let's see what I can do. How much could you pay, do you think?"

"Why, I don't know; 'bout a dollar." This seemed a large amount to May. "But I'd have to save it up. How many weeks would it take to make a dollar when you save ten cents a week?"

"'Cordin' to my calculations a matter of ten weeks."

"Oh, that's a long time. Do lambs grow very much in ten weeks?"

"Not so monstrous. However, I'll see what can be done and let you know next week when I come in. Sure, mamma will let you have one?"

"Ye-es, I think so."

"Better go ask her."

May hunted up her mother and made her inquiry. "Why, dear, I never thought of it seriously," Mrs. Garland said. "I'm afraid it would be a troublesome pet, but I will go and ask Mr. Snyder about it."

"Troublesome?" he repeated. "That's how you look at it. They'll eat anything in sight, but they're good for the grass; keep it down and save you a lawn-mower, but if they get into your garden, good-bye to the shrubbery."

"Then"— Mrs. Garland looked down at May. The little pleading face was too much for her. "Then what can we do about it?"

Mr. Snyder straightened himself up from his baskets and looked around. "I suppose it could run with your cow in the pasture-lot there, and when the little girl wanted to play with it she could bring it up in the yard and watch it that it did no mischief. It wouldn't be apt to do much damage for some time, anyhow."

"Very well, we will see. You haven't concluded a bargain, as I understand," she said, smiling.

"No, ma'am, not yet." Mr. Snyder smiled too.

"Want any spring chickens next week, Mrs. Garland? I'll have some first-rate fryers. My wife beats the Dutch for raising chickens."

"You may bring me a pair, then, Mr. Snyder."

He was already prepared to start, and called out as he drove off: "I'll keep that there matter in mind, little gal." And he did, for the next week after he had finished with his supplies he asked: "Where's the little gal? I've got something for her."

"She's next door with Eleanor," Jack told him.

"Just run fetch her, sonny." And Jack was very ready to go.

Eleanor and May were not long in obeying the summons. "Something for me, Mr. Snyder," said May eagerly, before she had reached him. "Oh, it isn't a lamb, is it?"

"Looks mightily like it," Mr. Snyder told her. He dived into the back of the wagon and brought out a basket. The children crowded around it, and when it was uncovered a little weak-looking lamb was disclosed. "The crittur wants coddling," Mr. Snyder told them, "and my wife's got her hands full, and has had enough of this kind

of thing anyhow, so, if you can raise the crittur you can have it for a dollar, and if it dies before it gets well up, why you needn't pay me anything. I reckon it will come easier to you to give me that ten cents a week, won't it?"

"Oh, yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Snyder. I hope it will live." May's expression of tender concern was something to see.

"And," continued Mr. Snyder, "when it gets to be a big sheep and you get tired of it I will buy it back from you at a fair price."

"Oh, I shall never want to part with it," May declared, positively.

Mr. Snyder winked at Jack. "All right, just mention it if you do. It's pretty young and I reckon you will have to raise it on a bottle."

"Like a baby? How lovely!" May gathered the small creature into her arms and bent her face down over it, while Eleanor was scarcely less interested.

For the rest of the day May devoted herself to the lamb and forgot so entirely that she was mistress of other small creatures, that it was bedtime before she remembered that Snap had not been

seen since morning. She was really very fond of her little dog. He was about the first pet that she remembered having, and had been given her by her grandfather.

"Oh, mamma," she sobbed, when she discovered that Snap was actually gone, "won't papa go and look for him? Oh, dear, oh, dear, suppose you had a new child and neglected me so I'd get lost, and he is my oldest one just as I am yours. Oh, dear, I shall cry all night." She did not cry all night, but she cried herself to sleep and her first thought the next morning was: "Where is Snap?"

She jumped up and dressed herself quietly, then she ran down-stairs. Martha, the cook, was already stirring, and to May's inquiry, "Has anything been seen of Snap?" she shook her head.

"No, child, not to my knowledge."

May opened the door and went out into the fresh spring morning. The dew lay thickly on the grass and the birds were caroling gaily. "I wish you wouldn't sing," said May, looking up into the trees. "I wish you would cry. I want my little Snap. I want Snap." Pinky came rub-

bing up against her and the kitten came dancing from the porch toward her. She gave each a gentle pat, remembering that neither one had received any attention from her the day before. Buff, strutting about, gave a sharp little crow, and with his nimble wife came running for crumbs. May went into the kitchen for scraps and threw them some bits. Her chicks were now big enough to run about alone, so she took them from their place in a corner of the woodhouse and allowed them to share with the others.

She looked at the group for a moment and then went on, calling "Snap! Snap! Here Snap!" But there was no joyous bark in answer, and at each step she grew more and more disheartened. She remembered all his cunning, affectionate ways. "You were the best of all, Snap, and you always loved me best." The tears which had gathered in her eyes were now rolling down her cheeks. She looked the stable over, went into all the outbuildings, but met with no success.

"He has been stolen; that is what has happened," May told herself. "Some one has stolen him and they have taken him where he can't get away."

She wandered on and on; down in the hollow where the violets were swarming the sunny side of the hill; into every hole and corner she peeped, climbing the hill on the other side. Here she stopped and leaned over the fence running along by Mr. Atkinson's place. "Snap, Snap," she called. She listened. Was it possible that she heard a distant yelp followed by a pitiful whine? She lost no time in climbing the fence. This was no time to ask permission, for she remembered, suddenly, that she and Eleanor had been over in Mr. Atkinson's grounds the day before. The family were away in Europe and the place was in charge of a gardener. She could hardly run fast enough through the wet grass and at every step or two she called "Snap, Snap," each call being answered by a sharp little bark, which became more and more distinct the further she went.

At last the sounds were located in an outhouse where the gardener kept some of his tools. May tried the door but it did not open. She must hunt up old Abner and get him to open the door. But first she put her mouth close to the keyhole to say: "Snap, dear Snap, we are coming, dar-

ling dog. Don't cry, your own mitty is coming to you." Snap gave a sudden bark of ecstasy and lapsed into silence. "He understands, the precious dear," said May, as she ran off.

Abner was at his breakfast. He was a gruff old fellow, but really kind at heart, and he very willingly left his bacon and eggs when he heard May's story. "Wonder I didn't hear the crittur," he said, "but now I remember I went over to Jenkin's last night after I shut up. I guess the dog followed me in. I recleck now he has always been mighty fond of gettin' in there after rats or some varmint, I suppose. Come along, sissy. You'd ought to look out better for him when you have him out."

"I know it," responded May, very meekly.

It was a very happy, dirty, hungry little dog that gave one bound as the door was opened. He had been down in the brook before he followed Abner, and he had rolled over in the dirt till he was a sight to behold. But May was aware of nothing but that he was found, and while he licked her face and hands with little whines of

delight, she kissed and hugged him till even grim old Abner smiled.

"You're not going back through that wet grass?" he said, as May started off.

"It is the nearest way," she said.

"Well, go along, then. You're a sight to see as it is, and I don't reckon you'll look much wuss when you get home, but I advise your mother to give you a dose of medicine and put you to bed, or you'll be down with croup or pneumony or somethin'."

May did not argue the question, but only said: "Thank you, Mr. Abner, for helping me to get Snap."

The little dog was welcomed by every one, for all were fond of him; but alas, for himself and for May, the one had to have a good washing, a process which he did not enjoy, and the other was obliged to take a dose of a certain medicine which she found hard to swallow.

"We'll give Snap his bath in his own old tub," Jack said. "I'll haul it out of the wood-shed. I saw it in there. Come, Snap."

Snap wagged his tail and followed very obedi-

Snap Had to Have a Good Washing

ently, watching Jack with much interest as he went into the wood-shed, but when the tub appeared Snap's tail suddenly dropped and he slunk off only to be caught and brought back by May. If there was one thing above another that Snap hated it was his tub. This was a discarded one of Rosalie's and had been given over to Snap's use.

"You've got to come, Snap; there's no use trying to get out of it," May said. "I had to take my medicine and now it is your turn. I feel very sorry for you, for you do hate it so, but we'll all come and keep you company, so you won't feel as if it were really a punishment."

The three children did gather around him, encouragingly, calling him dear little dog, and nice Snap, and good fellow till he did feel as if this ordeal were less dreadful than usual. Jack zealously scrubbed him while May and Rosalie looked on.

"He doesn't seem to mind it as much as usual," May remarked, and probably a night in the tool-house had subdued his spirit, for he stood very meekly and whimpered only once or twice.

"Never mind, Snap, it will soon be over," May told him. "I'd take my medicine over again a dozen times if it was for the sake of getting you back again," to which Snap responded by a little whine of appreciation, but it must be said that though he received more than his usual share of attention upon this day, at last he became disdainful of it and trotted off in search of new experiences, to the detriment of his clean coat.

HER PLAYS

CHAPTER IV

Her Plays

All through the long summer days May and Eleanor played together. Eleanor was accustomed to the presence of her cousin Florence in summer time, but this year Florence had made her visit early and had gone with her family to the seashore for the season, therefore, but for her neighbors, Eleanor would have been rather lonely. To be sure her cousin Rock was spending the early part of his summer at her house, but she was very glad to have May for a companion.

"Rock is a very nice boy," May told her mother, "and he plays with us without all the time saying: 'Ah, girls don't know.' I don't like boys that do that."

Her mother laughed and said boys were not as polite when they were little as they were when they grew older. "That is, they are not often so," she added.

May pondered over this for awhile, and then she continued the conversation by saying: "Rock's father has such a funny way of making a living; he breaks cotton."

"Why, May," her mother said, "what do you mean?"

"He does, mamma, Eleanor told me so."

Mrs. Garland looked puzzled. "Do you mean he has mills or something of that kind?"

May shook her head. "I don't think so, mamma, Eleanor said he had an office in the city and he was a cotton-broker."

Mrs. Garland laughed heartily. "A cotton-broker! That is quite another thing. I can hardly explain to you just what it does mean, but it is one who buys and sells cotton for other people."

"Oh, I thought it was one who breaks cotton. You know it is smoker, one who smokes; baker, one who bakes, and I thought it was broker, one who breaks. Words are very funny things, I think. Before Rock goes away, mamma, what do you suppose Mr. Atkinson is going to do?"

"I am sure I don't know. What is it?"

"He is going to give a garden party at his place and all the children are going to wear some sort of fancy dress, like flowers and outdoor things. Eleanor is going to do all the inviting. May I go if I am invited, mamma?"

"I will see about it."

May knew that was almost as good as consent, and she went off satisfied. She and Eleanor were quite excited over the prospect of their little fête, and when it was known that Mr. Atkinson really intended to give it, they could talk of little else, and even their plays must have something to do with what they called "dressing up," and one afternoon, when Eleanor proposed that they should be Revolutionary characters and wear caps, May was very ready to join in. Rock, too, when he learned of their intention, wanted to be Paul Revere and Jack was made to do service as a minute-man. It was very exciting when Rock, mounted on Spice, came dashing up to the door of the playhouse, and giving a thundering rap cried out: "The Regulars are coming! Arm for resistance!" And then Jack sprang from his improvised bed and was given sword

and powder horn, the latter rather useless since he had no gun, and was ready to sally forth.

"You must bid him God speed and say: 'Come back with your shield or on it,'—oh no, that was the Spartan mother or wife or something who said that," Eleanor told May. "I must say: 'I give you to your country, my son;' I am his mother you know, and you must say: 'Do your duty, John, and I will do mine;' you are his wife." And Jack, with a very fierce frown and prodigious stride, marched out.

"I declare," said May, "I am almost scared to death, really I am, Eleanor. When Rock knocked at the door it was so real, and I felt as if I must hide from the Regulars. I think it is perfectly splendid. I forget what Paul Revere did next."

Eleanor took down her volume of Longfellow and read:

> "So through the night rode Paul Revere,
> And so through the night went his cry of alarm
> To every Middlesex village and farm,—
> A cry of defiance and not of fear,
> A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,
> And a word that shall echo forevermore."

By this time Rock came clattering back again.

"They are fighting at Bunker's Hill, and Charlestown is burning," he said, "you will have to flee."

"Oh, dear," said Eleanor, "I am so comfortable I don't want to flee. Must we really, Rock?"

"Unless you want to be burned up. Don't you see the smoke rising yonder?" He pointed to the chimney of the Dallas's kitchen from which a slender spiral of smoke was ascending.

Eleanor laughed. "Well, I think I will stay."

"Pshaw, Dimple, you haven't any imagination," said Rock, in disgust.

"Oh, well, the exciting part is over now. You and Jack go and play cowboys or Indians. May and I will find something else to do. I am tired of battles and things."

"I think you are real mean. I don't see why we can't all play together," protested Rock.

But Eleanor, in rather a provoking way, began to hum a little tune, and Rock walked off. "I get tired of boys sometimes, don't you?" she asked May.

"Ye-es, but I think Rock is very good to play with Jack; he is such a little fellow, you know, and Rock could easily find a bigger boy. Do you

know? I'll tell you something, only you must never tell any one."

"I promise."

"It's about Jack. He has a doll."

"Oh, May."

"Yes, he has. He keeps her in his pocket. Her name is Tiny, and Jack is devoted to her. He takes her out and looks at her when no one is looking."

"I'd love to see her. I'm going to ask him to show her to me."

"Oh, no, please don't; he'd feel awfully. You see, he's sort of ashamed of her, but he doesn't like to give her up."

"I don't care; he needn't be ashamed. I am going to ask him." Eleanor was in rather a contrary mood that day. "Jack, Jack," she called. "I want to see Tiny. Show her to me."

The color flamed up into the little fellow's face, and his hand went to his pocket while he cast a reproachful glance at his sister.

May looked quickly at Rock. She was so afraid he would laugh at her little brother, and Jack was so sensitive about ridicule. But Rock had a

kindly smile on her face. "What are you all talking about?" he asked. "What is it you want to see, Dimple?"

"Something Jack carries around in his pocket," Eleanor replied, flippantly.

Jack's face grew redder and redder, and he jerked his hand from his pocket, threw the little doll on the ground and fled.

Rock stooped and picked Tiny up. "You oughtn't to have done that, Dimple," he said, in a low voice. The doll was not hurt and he carried it over to where Jack stood, his back to them all. "See here, old fellow," began Rock,—"Why, what's the matter?" for the tears were coursing down Jack's cheeks.

"I'm afraid I broke her all to pieces," said Jack, in a tremulous voice.

"Oh, no, you didn't; here she is as good as ever. Isn't she a cunning little thing?" He slipped the doll into Jack's hand. "Do you know I used to have two dolls when I was a little chap. I only gave them up a couple of years ago, but I have them yet, and I take them out every now and then and look at them."

The tears were still standing on Jack's lashes, but he looked up at Rock gratefully. If this big boy had played with dolls and wasn't ashamed of it he needn't be. Like most small boys he admired an older one, such as Rock, immensely, and his little heart warmed all the more toward him as Rock went on. "See here, let us go off and play by ourselves. I know a jolly game you'll like. We'll leave the girls to their own plays. Eleanor is in rather a bad humor to-day."

Jack trotted off by Rock's side, ready to follow him to the end of the world in the gratitude of his heart.

May felt rather uneasy, but did not say anything to Eleanor, who was beginning to feel quite ashamed of herself, but who sat on her little table swinging her feet.

"I guess I had better go home," said May, after a silence which did not seem very promising. "Nora is out and I shall have to look after the baby a little."

"Bring her over here and Bubbles will take care of her; she will love to do it."

"Oh, but perhaps she has something else to do and hasn't the time."

"Yes, she has. She always has the time free before she has the supper table to set. Bring her over, anyhow, and she can stay here with us and be perfectly safe. I'll go ask your mother, if you don't want." Eleanor was anxious to make amends for her behavior to Jack.

"Well," returned May, slowly.

They went off together very amicably and returned with the little maid between them. "Rose Garland, you are a darling," Eleanor said, ecstatically. "I'd like to wear you on a hat, you are so sweet."

"No, no," Rosalie shook her head. The idea did not please her.

Eleanor laughed and hugged her. "Well, I won't then. We will go over and play in the little house and you shall be my child. Bubbles is coming to play with you in a minute. Do you like Bubbles?"

"Bubble," responded Rosalie, contentedly. She was very fond of Bubbles, who knew just how to amuse her, and with the little colored girl installed as nurse it seemed that there would be no more trouble.

But they were hardly settled when Bubbles looking up exclaimed: "I 'clar, Miss Dimple, hyar come dat Olly Murder."

"Who?" May was quite startled by this dreadful name.

"She means my cousin, Olive Murdoch. She's not a very near cousin, but I wish she wasn't any relation at all. Let's keep very still and I'll lock the door so she won't know we are in here."

They crouched giggling in one corner, having shut both door and windows. Presently rat-a-tat came Olive's knock at the door. The children pressed their hands against their lips to keep in their laughter. "She'll go directly," Eleanor whispered.

But Olive was persistent. "I know you are in there, Eleanor. Your mother told me I should find you here, and the boys said so, too."

"We'll have to let her in," May whispered, but Eleanor held her back as she attempted to get up. "No, no, don't. She just says that." But here a little mouse, attracted to the playhouse by the crumbs frequently to be found there, ran across the floor and Rosalie gave a squeal which betrayed them.

"I heard you," said Olive. "Let me in."

"Bubbles, go and let her in," said Eleanor, resignedly, an order which Bubbles obeyed reluctantly, for there was no love lost between her and Olive.

"Why didn't you let me in sooner?" Olive asked, as she entered.

"We were playing," Eleanor replied, rather lamely.

"Didn't you hear me knock?"

"Ye-es, but"——

"I think you are very impolite. I've come up to take tea with you." This was said in a very condescending manner as if it were a great favor.

"Oh, have you?" Eleanor looked at May.

"I'm going home," said May, not liking this visitor at all. "Come Rosy-Posy."

"Oh, don't go on my account," said Olive, tartly. "I suppose this is your neighbor, Eleanor, though you haven't taken the trouble to introduce me."

"It is May Garland," Eleanor told her. "Don't go, May, I want you to stay."

"And don't want me, I suppose," Olive went

on. "I'm going to stay anyway. Mamma said I was to. She has gone out with Jessie and Alma and said Don and I were to come here."

"Don? Where is he?"

"He has gone to find Rock."

"Then Jack must come home," said May, and with Rosalie she went out to gather up Jack and to return home, leaving Eleanor by no means pleased with the turn of affairs.

Jack was quite ready to go with his sister. He had had some experience with Don before this, and although Rock would not have permitted any trouble, Don was inclined to bully and Jack had no idea of standing that. So he ran off at May's call, and the fence was soon between the Garland children and Eleanor and her company.

May's various pets came to meet her. Snap was not on very good terms with Eleanor's cat, Nixy, and was not permitted to go with his mistress when she visited her neighbor. The lamb was growing apace and was ready to follow May all about. She was named Suzette, and she and Snap had struck up a queer friendship.

Mrs. Garland was ready to take Rosalie, and

May proposed to Jack that they should go to the hollow to play. They were interested in a tiny mysterious grotto which they were making here. They had adorned it with ferns and various lichens and mosses. In the centre they had placed a bit of looking-glass to represent a miniature lake and had paved the floor with the prettiest pebbles they could find. The finishing touch was the setting up of some odd little pieces of china furniture which some one had given May. Two wee china dolls reigned over the grotto, and the two children considered it a very fascinating secret, for not even Eleanor knew of it. It was hidden from sight by a large stone, which was rolled up against the entrance whenever the children left it.

With the lamb and Snap in company they set off for the hollow, but had hardly started in with their play when they heard a voice call: "See here, Rock, did you ever know such a girl-boy, playing with dolls?"

May started to her feet. There stood Don Murdoch pointing a jeering finger at Jack, yet with curiosity examining the little cave.

"You've no business in here," said May, her cheeks very red. "What did you come for? This isn't your place and you have no right to come in without being asked."

"Well, I reckon I have. It belongs to my cousins."

"No, it doesn't, at least my father rents it with the rest of the place and you have no more right here than you have in any one's house, has he, Rock? You shan't come in. I'll have you arrested. The sign says: 'No trespassing.'"

"Yah! yah! yah! Ain't you in a fine temper? I'll come if I choose."

"No, you won't," said Rock. "Come right back, Don. I didn't know you and Jack were here, May. We thought we would take the short cut."

"Oh, I don't mind you, Rock; you know that, for you never meddle and don't say hateful things, but we did so want to keep this from every one. It was such a nice secret."

"I'm sorry," Rock returned. "It is too bad. I won't tell, and say, Don, don't you do it either."

But Don said nothing, and May was not at all

sure but that he would. At all events their fun was spoiled and they regretfully left the place and went down to the brook to gather more stones for their pavement.

HER BROTHER

CHAPTER V

Her Brother

THE next day that May and Jack went to the hollow, true enough, the stone had been removed from the entrance to the grotto, the glass was smashed, the pieces of furniture scattered about, the stones thrown in every direction and the dolls strung up by their necks to a branch. "It's that wicked Don," cried May, almost in tears. "I can't bear that boy, and I don't see why Rock lets him tag after him. I don't know what we will do when Rock goes away. There is nothing to do now, Jack, but to find another place and build another grotto, but I don't believe we shall ever find all our pretty stones again." And indeed, they did not find them all, though they did manage to rebuild their grotto in another place and to keep it a secret for quite a long time. In fact it was not till Fourth of July that it was discovered and then it came about in this way.

Jack had always longed to fire off a pistol or a rifle, but his parents thought him far too young to be allowed to use firearms, and had never permitted it. Jack, himself, was persuaded that it was because they had always lived in the city where it would be dangerous. In this place where the houses were far apart, with grounds between, he could not see why it should not be perfectly safe. He thought about it so much that as Fourth of July approached he contrived a plan which he proceeded to carry out.

The gardner, a good-natured Irishman, was very fond of Jack, and to him the little boy first made his wish known. "Patrick," he said, "won't you lend me your pistol to fire off early Fourth of July? I'll go 'way off and shoot it right up into the sky so it can't hit anyone."

"Except yersel', beloike," returned Patrick.

"No, I won't. If you only knew, Patrick, how I do want to do it, you'd lend it to me just this once."

"What'll the mother say if you come home kilt entoirely?"

"I won't come home that way. I won't indeed, Patrick."

"I'll not lind it to yez."

"Please."

"No, sorr, I'll not. I'll be losin' me job, an' yez'll be losin' an arrum or a leg or the top av yer head."

"Then, please, just let me look at it, Patrick."

Patrick led the way to the stable and produced an old pistol. He had often explained its workings to Jack and the little fellow knew every part of it. He begged to be allowed to hold it, and Patrick so far consented as to let him take it in his hands, watching him very carefully. Jack sighed deeply as Patrick put the pistol back in its place, but his mind was made up. He must get that pistol for the Fourth, or life would not be worth living.

He was out of bed bright and early on that holiday. All around firecrackers were popping. The boys in the town were having a good time. Once in a while came a louder report, and Jack decided that he must lose no time in adding to the noise. Patrick was driving the cow to pasture, and Jack with his heart beating fast, crept into the stable, precured the pistol, and holding it very gingerly, made off at a rapid rate.

He trotted along till he was well out of sight of the house, and had reached a little bridge which spanned a stream into which flowed the brook in the hollow.

Having reached this place the small boy looked around. No one was in sight. A fence this side, a field that, the creek between. Once, twice, he raised his pistol, his heart beating fast. Where was his courage? "Hurrah for Fourth of July!" he piped up, in rather a shaky voice, it must be admitted, but the sound of it gave him the courage he needed, and he raised the pistol a third time, cocked it, pulled back the trigger and the hammer fell.

"Bang!" Jack staggered. What had hit him? He wasn't quite sure what had happened, but he heard a crash of glass and a cry of "Murder! Murder!" He ran to the fence and peeped through a knot-hole. There were houses below there along a hillside. He had not dreamed of such a thing. A woman was screaming. Men were running in every direction.

The child was paralyzed with fright. He had killed some one. They were running after him.

For a minute he stood, pistol in hand, and then he ran with all his might toward the hollow, rolled the stone from the entrance of the grotto, laid the pistol inside, and with shaking hand, replaced the stone. Then he crept into the garden. He knew that Patrick would be away all day on some jollification, and that here was a safe place of hiding between the rows of tall corn and beans. He crouched down under the rustling blades and listened fearfully, each minute expecting that some one would pounce down upon him. Every vehicle that rattled by; every shout struck terror to his soul. Would they miss him at home? Would they let the officers come to arrest him? Had any one seen him? Oh, how dreadfully his mother and May would feel to see him dragged off. The tears ran down his cheeks at the thought.

The hours wore on. He was very hungry, for he had had no breakfast, but he did not dare to show himself. He heard Rosalie's merry voice, and May laughing blithely. He heard Bubbles singing cheerily over in the Dallas's garden, and, after a time he heard Rock calling him, but he did not stir.

"Jack, Jack," came the call, nearer and nearer. Rock was hunting for him in the hollow. Suppose he knew; or Don; he was a much worse boy that Don, he considered, and the tears began to fall faster and faster as he lay there hidden by the whispering, rustling corn. He remembered the story of King Midas and how the reeds said, "King Midas has asses' ears." To him the corn whispered, "John Garland has shot some one. Here he is: Jack Garland."

All day long he cowered in his hiding place. During the afternoon he fell asleep, being worn out with fear and misery, and when he woke up it was evening, and being then overdone with hunger, he cautiously crept out and by a roundabout way reached the house. The family were at supper. How good the fried chicken and biscuits smelled. It seemed to Jack that he could eat anything that was set before him. He sidled into the room and up to the table. No one seemed surprised to see him. It was to be expected that upon the Fourth of July a boy would stay away from home all day; moreover, Rock had gone to Mr. Snyder's for the day and every one supposed that Jack had gone with him.

"I suppose there will be the usual list of accidents," said Mrs. Garland, as her husband unfolded the evening paper.

Jack nearly jumped from his chair. They hadn't heard! He waited in a perfect panic to hear more, yet his appetite was not satisfied and he helped himself to another biscuit.

"I believe Jack could eat a whole chicken," said May. "Didn't they give you any dinner at Mr. Snyder's?"

"Mr. Snyder's?"

"Yes, haven't you been there all day with Rock?"

"No."

"Where were you, then?"

Jack hesitated. "Oh, just around."

"I suppose you fired off all your firecrackers before breakfast," Mr. Garland remarked. "You were up bright and early. I remember myself how it was when I was a youngster, I could scarcely wait for daylight on the Fourth."

This required no special reply, and Jack went on eating.

"I don't believe the child thought of getting

any dinner," Mrs. Garland said; "that's enthusiasm for you; I can't imagine anything that would usually compensate for that. The cry usually is: Mamma, when will dinner be ready? But to-day I have not even been asked for a cracker."

Just then some one called for Mr. Garland, who arose and went out on the porch. Jack shook in his shoes. At last he was tracked. He dropped his chicken-bone and sat quaking with fear.

"Who was it?" Mrs. Garland asked, when her husband returned.

"Only a man to see me on a little matter of business; something about the railroad." He took up his paper again. "Listen to this," he said: "'This morning about six o'clock there was quite a scare in the family of Edward McCarty on Hill street. Some enthusiastic patriot in celebrating Fourth of July, fired off a pistol rather recklessly and wildly and the shot struck a window in McCarty's house, doing no greater damage than to shatter a pane of glass and thoroughly frighten the family who were at breakfast. Mrs. McCarty rushed into the street crying murder!

and for a few minutes there was great excitement. No clue to the individual practising this cowboy method of shooting could be obtained.'"

Jack listened with wide-opened eyes, his face getting redder and redder. At the end of the reading his relief was so intense that he left the room and ran out on the porch.

"Jack acts queerly," said his mother. "I wonder if the child is not feeling well."

"Oh, he has had too much excitement, probably," his father answered. "He'll be all right to-morrow. I suppose he has gone out to look at the rockets; it takes a stupendous amount of fireworks to satisfy a boy of his age."

"Oh, I must tell him," May cried; "we are all going to Mr. Atkinson's to see him send off his fireworks. Eleanor says he has some beauties, and she wants Jack and me to go with her and Rock. I must tell him."

Jack was very quiet all the evening, and even the rockets and Roman candles and pinwheels and hissing serpents did not rouse him to his usual eager excitement. He was greatly relieved that no harm had come of his morning's performance,

but he still felt an uneasy pricking of conscience.

"What's the matter, Jack?" Rock asked. "Tired out? Did you have a good time to-day? You ought to have been with me. I looked everywhere for you and couldn't find you. I took Spice and went off to Mr. Snyder's, and we had a lot of fun out there. Mr. Snyder and Lem and I fired at a target and I hit the bull's eye twice. You ought to have been there. I don't doubt but that Mr. Snyder would have let you take a hand. Then we had a lot of firecrackers that I took out with me, and we fired them off under a barrel; you ought just to have heard the noise; I tell you it was great, and the fun of it was that we could make all the noise we wanted to and nobody cared, for we were so far off in the country that it didn't make any difference. Then we went out on the river and had a good time rowing. We went way up to the island and took supper. Mrs. Snyder went with us and we made coffee and had no end of a good time. Lem caught a whopping big fish. You ought just to have seen it, and we had it for supper, because Mr.

Snyder said we ought to, as long as it was Fourth of July."

Then, as if Jack's regrets at having lost all this fun were not enough, May told him on the way home: "Jack, you missed it by not being home to dinner; we had ice-cream. Mamma tried to save you some, but it all melted and so she said there was no use trying to keep it. I don't see how you could play all day long and not want the good things everybody has on the Fourth of July."

So poor Jack went to bed that night feeling that if ever a naughty boy was punished by bringing upon himself all this, he was the boy. He had missed so much and all for one-half minute's having his own way.

He was up early the next morning, meaning to get the pistol and replace it before it was missed. He was on his way to the hollow when Patrick waylaid him. "Perdooce thim foirearms," said Pat.

Jack looked up at Patrick's stern countenance, and then down at his feet.

"Ye little spalpeen, yez'll be afther helpin' yersel' to it, I know. Get it at wanst, er I'll till yer father."

"Oh, Patrick."

"I'll do that same."

"I'll get it, but please don't come."

"Ye'll get it nothin' unlest I'm there. I'll not thrust yez wid th' handlin' av it at all. Ye'll show me where it is or I'll know the raison whoy."

Jack looked up with pitiful entreaty. "Please don't tell, Patrick. I did take it."

"Av coorse, I said it. It's not in the nature av a foirearm to go thraipsin' off by its lone to kape Fourth of Jooly. Come on, now."

Jack trotted along by the man's side. Patrick was always very good to him, and Jack was sure he would not tell. So he led him to the grotto in the hollow and pointed out the hiding-place.

A smile flickered around Patrick's mouth, but he still frowned. He seated himself upon a big stone and held Jack between his knees. "Now, then," he said, raising a warning finger, "make a clean breast av it. 'Twas yersel', I don't misdoubt, that was upsettin' Mrs. McCarty at breakfast, me sister-in-law, she is, an' she tells me av the bullet that came from nowhere an' that scairt the loife out av her, an' I says nothin', but I kapes up a

dale of thinkin' whin I foind me pistol gone, an' says I to meself, there'll be but wan bhoy who do be takin' that, an' I can name him with me eyes shut."

Jack faltered out his story, and Patrick, half smiling, half frowning, listened, while he told it with many pauses and some stumbling.

"Ye were well punished, I'm thinkin', and it's a mercy that ye hit nobody. 'Twas more by good luck than by good management that come about. Now, me lad, I'd advise ye to tell yer father an' give him the whole av it. I think whin he knows what a plisint Fourth av Jooly ye spint, that he'll not begrudge ye the use av the pistol for the wan shot, seein' as it did no more harm. Ye'll feel betther afther. It's good advice I'm givin' ye, me lad."

He took Jack's cold hand in his and they went back to the stable. "There's yer father on the porch now," said Patrick, "run in and tell him an' ye'll eat a betther breakfast for it."

Jack proceeded slowly up the walk; it was a bitter moment, but he stood by his guns, and told a plain unvarnished tale.

"It wasn't right, son," his father told him, when he had finished; "it was a direct act of disobedience, but I think you have had your lesson. Suppose you had really hurt any one, think what a heavy burden you would have had to carry the rest of your life."

"I know," said Jack, very meekly. "I never was so miserable in all my life, papa. I didn't know any one could be so miserable on the Fourth of July."

"You see your act brought its own punishment this time, so we will let it go at that, for I am quite sure that Patrick's pistol is safe so far as you are concerned."

"You bet it is," replied Jack, so decidedly, that his father smiled, and they went in to breakfast together, a great weight lifted from Jack's heart.

Still he could never bear to see the grotto after that, and though May did not know why he was tired of it, she soon found out that he never wanted to play there anymore, so she confided the secret of its place to Eleanor, and then Bubbles came upon them there one day, so after that it was simply one of many amusements.

Mr. Garland and Patrick kept Jack's secret, a fact for which he was very grateful, and after this he was much less ready to think Don a very bad boy, for there was something in his father's look when he called Don a sneak and a mischievous thing, that made him remember that he was by no means perfect himself.

HER NAUGHTINESS

CHAPTER VI

Her Naughtiness

No one expects children to be perfect, and if Jack had his faults, so did May have hers. Though she was generally an obedient and conscientious little girl, it was very hard for her to deny herself anything she wanted very much, and since the purchase of her lamb meant that she must put by all her spending money for ten long weeks, it made a season of self-denial a very long one to her. Mr. and Mrs. Garland did not believe in giving their children much spending money, for they were supplied with all that they needed in their comfortable home, and a tendency to buy luxuries, they believed, would lead them to be thriftless and extravagant. The lamb was thriving finely, and May had grown so fond of it that she thought it was worth much more than the dollar which Mr. Snyder asked for it.

"I think it is an excellent thing that May must

save her money to pay for her lamb," Mrs. Garland said to her husband, "for she is inclined to spend her pocket-money the moment she gets it, and I think this discipline is good for her."

But May had many temptations, and if she had not been ashamed to do it, she would have asked Mr. Snyder to wait for his money. But her mother saw to it that she received her ten cents on the very day that Mr. Snyder appeared, and so she could have no excuse.

One day, however, she had gone to a little shop down town, where the children were accustomed to spend their pennies, and which was kept by an old woman named Mrs. Wills. It was quite a curious old place, full of all sorts of things attractive to children. There was one especial kind of candy which May liked above everything else, and upon this day she stood looking with longing eyes at a jar of it freshly filled. If she only had her ten cents, or even half of it, she could gratify her desire for this delicious dainty. While Mrs. Wills was counting out the buttons May had been sent for, the little girl stood with eyes fixed on the jar. Each minute it seemed more and more as if she

must have one of those thick nutty sticks. It would be only five cents. Her mother would lend her that much, maybe. But then she remembered that her mother would not do that, for she consented to a loan only when it was something very important for which May wanted to spend her money. So she drew a long sigh and put away that thought.

Suddenly came a temptation: she would get it and ask Mrs. Wills to charge it. She would pay for it the first week after the lamb was paid for; that would be five weeks from now. So she said very timidly, "Please give me a stick of the nut-candy, Mrs. Wills. I haven't any money to-day, but I will pay you the next time that I come in."

Mrs. Wills smilingly took down the jar and drew forth a thick stick of the nutty sweetness, which she wrapped up and gave to May with her parcel of buttons. "Let me see," she said, "what is your name? I forget a good deal, and there are so many little girls, you know."

"My name is May Garland."

"Yes, yes, the new people. Wreaths, garlands. Yes, yes, I'll remember. You live next to the little Dallas girl."

May went out the door with its little bell jangling after her. She felt rather mean about what she had done, and she kept wondering what she could do with the candy, and where she could put it so no one would see it when she reached home. She thrust it into her bureau drawer before she went into her mother's room with the buttons, and when she had an opportunity she drew it forth and ran to the garret with it, hoping that Jack would not come up there. She ate it hastily instead of lingeringly, as she always did and it did not last very long. She was afraid to save any lest her mother should come across it. And so, what would have ordinarily lasted a day or two, was consumed in two or three minutes. In consequence she was not very hungry for her dinner, and the huckleberry pudding of which she was very fond, could not be half appreciated by her.

"Don't you feel well, daughter?" her mother asked.

"Yes, mamma, but I don't feel hungry."

"That's too bad, when we have your favorite dessert. I thought you would enjoy it so much."

May did not reply, but she thought of the candy with a guilty feeling.

That evening, when Mr. Garland came home, from his pocket was sticking a package done up in white paper. "Here daughter," he said to May, "I have brought you a little treat. Take it to mamma and ask her to give you some. I came across some of that nut candy you like so much, and I thought I would bring you all some of it, for I remembered that my little girl's sweet tooth doesn't get favored quite as much now that she is saving up her pennies."

To think of it! a whole package of that delicious candy, and she needn't have run into debt for any. Oh dear, if one could only know what was going to happen. It was such a good, kind, papa to think of bringing it. If he only knew what a deceitful daughter he had how disappointed he would be in her. She had already eaten so much of the candy that this second treat did not taste half as good as she expected, and she stowed away in a box the greater part of her share of it.

The next day there was another errand to Mrs. Wills' shop.

"Can't Jack go?" May asked.

"Why not you?" asked her mother. "Jack has gone off somewhere with Rock, and I am in a hurry for these things. I thought you liked to go."

May hung her head. "I do, sometimes."

"Don't you like to go alone? Is that it? I've no doubt that Eleanor will be glad to go with you."

May's moral courage was not great enough to allow her to face Mrs. Wills. Suppose she should ask her for the money there before Eleanor. May thought that she would be mortified to death if such a thing were to happen. She sat still, wondering how she could get out of doing the errand.

"Come, dear," her mother said, "I want you to go right away. If Eleanor can't go with you, then take Snap; he is always good company, I am sure."

That gave May an idea. Eleanor would be perfectly willing to go in and ask for the things, for if May took Snap she could make the excuse that she didn't want to let him go into the shop, and that she must stay outside and watch him;

for Mrs. Wills had her own pets and did not like dogs to get in and worry her old duck or her cat.

The plan worked very well. May went over to Eleanor's and found that she was glad to take the walk, and was quite ready to make the purchases, since there was Snap to be taken into consideration, and May felt that all had gone on very smoothly.

But it was when Eleanor came out of the shop that May's discomfort began, for Eleanor began to say: "Poor old Mrs. Wills, I feel so sorry for her. She has such a hard time getting along, for some bigger shops have been started in the town, and she has lost customers because she is so queer and old-fashioned. The children go to her, but hardly any one else does, and some people who came here owe her a lot of money and have moved away without paying their bill. I think that is just as wicked as can be. Why, it was stealing to take her things and not pay for them. She has had so much trouble, too, and has had hard work to get along in the best of times, and if people are so mean as to cheat her that way, papa says she will lose her little home and will have to

go to the poorhouse, for she hasn't a soul to do anything for her. Can you imagine any one so mean, May, as to owe money to a poor old woman like that, who needs every cent she can scrape together?"

May felt as if she would like the ground to swallow her up. She was one of those dreadful persons who owed money. She had taken advantage of a poor old woman.

"Besides," Eleanor went on, quite unconscious of the sharp digs she was giving May, "it wasn't as if those people had bought things that they really needed; I can imagine if anybody is very hungry, or has to have medicine that he would go in debt for such things, and bills have to be sometimes. It is all right when it is to some one that doesn't need the money, but these people bought cakes and candy and fruit and such things that no one ought to get unless there is plenty of money to pay for them. I just hate such people. Besides, Mrs. Wills is so generous and always wants to give when she can."

May's opinion of herself sank lower and lower. She meant to pay Mrs. Wills, of course, but sup-

pose everybody did so, how could the old woman get along?

"Mamma says, 'many a mickle makes a muckle,'" Eleanor went on, "and she says that when one here and one there owes Mrs. Wills, it all counts up, though it seems very little to each one, but altogether it really makes a big lot that she needs and ought to have. I'd rather go without things all my life than to owe her one cent, wouldn't you, May?"

May murmured something which was not very distinct, but Eleanor did not notice; she was so deeply occupied with her subject.

When she parted with May at the gate it was a very unhappy little girl whom she left. May mounted the stair slowly and went to her mother. "Here is the thread, mamma," she said.

"Thank you, dear. What makes you look so miserable?"

"Do I look miserable? I didn't know it." Then in a low voice, "I am so sorry for Mrs Wills."

"Yes, poor old soul, I am sorry for her, too. I try to get all I can from her, for I have heard that

she is not thriving, and every little helps, you know."

May stood gazing out of the window. "Mamma," she said, in a stifled voice, "is there any way I could earn five cents right away, to-day?"

"Why, dearie, did you see something at Mrs. Wills' shop that tempted you beyond endurance, and you think you can't get through the day without it? Tell me what it is."

"It isn't anything, but it was something. Oh, mamma, I am dreadfully wicked."

"Why, my child."

"Yes, mamma, I am one of those people who are keeping Mrs. Wills out of her money. I—I —got a stick of nut-candy from her and I didn't pay her."

Her mother looked horrified. "You don't mean you took it, May."

"Oh, no, mamma, but it was next bad. I asked her to let me have it, and I told her I would pay her the next time I came in, and—and"——

"I see. That is why you did not want to go there to-day."

"Yes, mamma. I meant to pay her, of course,

but I can't save the money for five weeks and I feel so ashamed. I wish—I wish—I had not done it." There was more than one catch in her voice as she made her confession, and now she gulped down the lump that would rise in her throat and winked away the tears which were filling her eyes.

Her mother did not speak for a moment, then she said, in that low grieved voice that always went to May's heart, "I am so sorry to hear this, so sorry. Of course you must pay it at once. It is really very little, I know, and really would not make much difference, but if every little girl indulged herself in that way it would soon amount to dollars and would seriously trouble Mrs. Wills. Besides it is a bad principle to go upon. You know papa and I do not approve of such things."

"I know, mamma. I knew it wasn't right all the time, and you know it was the day papa brought home some of that very kind of candy, and that made me feel worse, because he was so good and I was so bad. I felt so ashamed when I saw that he had bought some." And the tears would no longer be restrained but began to flow

fast and faster. "What can I do, mamma?" the child asked; "I will do anything you say, if I can only earn the money to pay for that candy, I don't believe I shall ever want to see that kind again."

"Take this five cents and go right down and pay your debt, and while you are gone I will try to think of something you can do to earn the money. I have no doubt but that I can find some work for you."

May dried her eyes and ran very swiftly to the shop and laid the nickel on the counter. "I owe you this, Mrs. Wills," she said, breathlessly. "I am sorry I couldn't pay it sooner."

The old woman smiled and said: "Thank you, little girl, I wish everybody was as prompt. Howsomeever, I guess the Lord won't let me starve. Come in and see my pigeons. I've a nice lot of them."

May followed her to the queer back yard and saw the pretty tame creatures strutting about or flying down to see if their friend, the old woman, had brought them some tid-bit. "Jack wants some pigeons, so much," May said. "Would you sell him some, Mrs. Wills?"

May Followed Her to the Queer Back Yard

"Why, yes, child, I'd sell almost anything nowadays."

"Then, maybe—I'll tell Jack. He wants some for his birthday, and perhaps papa will get them for him. I'll tell him all about them. How tame they are, and what queer little red feet they have. I believe they know you, Mrs. Wills."

"I believe they do. Most of my creatures are very tame. I bring them up that way like children." She nodded, and repeated the words to herself in a way that she had, and then led May back to the shop, but stopped her on her way out, having gone to the case for a cake which she offered her.

The little girl put her hands behind her. "Oh, no, I couldn't, please, Mrs. Wills; just keep it for me," she said, laughing, "and when I have a penny I'll come and get it." She put her two soft hands on the old woman's poor maimed ones, for Mrs. Wills had been badly burned at one time. "Please, Mrs. Wills," she said, "mamma wouldn't like me to take it. Good-bye." She stood on tip-toe and kissed the withered old cheek and the tears came to Mrs. Wills' eyes. "A wreath of May,"

she murmured. "I remember it when I was young."

May ran home and sought her mother, losing no time in telling of the pigeons. "They are such pretty ones, mamma, and so tame. I know they are just what Jack would like."

"I'll speak to your papa about them," her mother told her. "I should be very glad if he decides to give them to Jack, for we all would like to get anything we can from Mrs. Wills. Poor old soul, she is queer and flighty, but so kind-hearted and has never done any one a wrong in her life"— She paused and shook her head.

"I am so glad I have paid my debt," sighed May. "Now, mamma, tell me quick, have you anything for me to do?"

"Yes, I have six tea towels for you to hem. I will give you a cent apiece for them."

"Good! then I'll have a penny for the cake she wanted to give me. I really don't want it, mamma, for Martha makes much better ones, but do you think it would be wasteful if I were to go back and get it after I have finished these?"

"No, under the circumstances, I don't suppose

it will be, for you are not doing it for yourself, but to help a very deserving person."

"Then I will stay in and sew all the afternoon." And warm though it was and sticky as the fingers grew, so that thread broke and knotted and the needle refused to go through, it was a very contented and satisfied little girl who at last finished her work and received her extra penny.

HER GOODNESS

CHAPTER VII

Her Goodness

May lost no time in telling her father about Mrs. Wills' pigeons, and he promised to go down and look at them and would perhaps get some of them for Jack's birthday present. Rock had promised to help build a pigeon-house and Patrick said the "burruds" would thrive well down by the stables. Therefore, there was much talk of Fantails and Blue Antwerps and Pouters and what-not till Jack's birthday, when three pairs of the pretty creatures, with their iridescent neck and their pink feet, were presented to Jack.

"My, but they are beauties!" the little fellow cried, his face shining. "Papa, I think you are the best man in town." He lost no time in rushing over to see Rock, and the two boys spent the entire day in watching Jack's new possessions, and even afterward they spent hours at a time gazing at them from some spot,—generally it was

the roof of the wood-shed,—and in commenting upon the different points of each.

Rock liked these so well that he decided that he must have some of the same kind, and then two or three other boys caught the enthusiasm, and so Mrs. Wills drove quite a trade in pigeons for a while.

But the old woman was growing feeble, and her little shop became more and more bare-looking, so that by the end of the summer it seemed as if she must really give up. Her withered old face wore a pitiful expression nowadays, and every one felt very sorry for her, but no one more so than May and Eleanor. May, particularly, thought much about it, for ever since the circumstance of her small debt she felt in some way responsible.

"What is a mortgage, mamma?" she asked one day.

"Why, let me see. Suppose you wanted to raise some money very much and you should come to me for it and should say I will pay you twenty-five cents a year for the use of five dollars, and if I can't pay the five dollars when you want it, I will let you take my lamb; that would be a mort-

gage on the lamb, and if I were to foreclose the mortgage I would take your lamb and sell it and pay myself the five dollars, or I could keep the lamb."

"But suppose it should sell for more than five dollars."

"Then you would have whatever was over that amount."

May nodded. She understood why Mrs. Wills was worried. She could not pay the interest on her mortgage and could not make enough for her other expenses. She must either give up her home or her business, and since the shop afforded her the only way of making a living, she was at her wit's ends.

"Papa, I wish you could give Mrs. Wills the money to pay her mortgage," May said to her father. "I would do anything in the world if you could; I would go without butter or candy or dessert for a whole year."

"I am afraid that would not help the matter much," her father said, smiling.

"Then couldn't you do it, anyhow?"

"I'm afraid I could not afford it, and I don't

believe the old lady would allow it. She is very proud and will not accept anything that is offered in charity."

"But you could lend her the money."

"She has no way of paying it back, and she is too honorable a woman to take it under the circumstances."

May said no more to him at that time, but took the matter to Eleanor and they talked it over together. "Mr. Atkinson is a very rich man," said Eleanor. "He is the richest man in the town, but he isn't here very often, and besides, I wouldn't like to ask him to do anything like that."

"I would," said May. "I wish I knew him, I would say, Mr. Atkinson, if you want to do some good with your money I will tell you a lovely way to do it: you can send Mrs. Wills enough to pay her mortgage and not let her know where it comes from, so she couldn't give it back, and would have to take it, and then you would feel so comfortable whenever you thought of it."

"Oh, but I couldn't say all that. I would not have the courage."

"Then I will tell you what you might do: you

might tell him not to have the lawn party, but to give you the money it would cost, and we could put the money in an envelope and take it to Mrs. Wills, and slip it in her money-drawer when she wasn't looking."

"Oh, but I couldn't ask him to do that. He would think I was crazy, and mamma would not like me to ask him for money."

"Not if you told him what you wanted it for."

But Eleanor was shy about it. She wanted to help Mrs. Wills, but she couldn't bring herself to make such a request. And so May determined that something must be done. She thought about it a great deal and at last hit upon a plan. On the next Saturday afternoon, Mr. Atkinson, sitting upon his front porch, saw a little figure approaching. He usually came up from the city to remain over Sunday, though his family were in Europe, and the house was closed during the week. But he was fond of the place and liked the quiet. Knowing, that in pleasant weather, he was generally to be found there on Saturdays, May started forth. She had carefully arrayed herself in her very best and carried a new blue parasol. She

took the long way around and went in by the main entrance and up the gravel walk.

Mr. Atkinson arose to meet her. "Well, my little lass," he said, "what can I do for you? I am very glad to see you. Come up and sit down." He drew a chair forward and May seated herself gravely. Now that she was really here, she was overcome with the thought of her temerity, and for a minute or two could not speak a word.

She had hardly recovered herself sufficiently to say: "I am May Garland, and I came to ask you"—when, looking up, she saw a second figure coming in the gate, a very small person, carrying, with great difficulty, a parasol much too large for her, and wearing a pair of kid gloves in which her tiny hands were lost. Around her shoulders was a white shawl, the fringe of which trailed in the dust behind her, and on her head was a hat which quite eclipsed the little head, whose short golden locks peeped out from under the hat's crown. The small person approached with confidence and a voice piped up: "Here's Wosy, May. I tomed, too."

May jumped up in confusion. It was Rosalie, who, in this fantastic garb, had followed her. "Rosalie!" she cried, "you naughty child!"

Rosalie put up a grieved lip. If May could dress up and go out calling, why not she? "Wosy dood dirl?" she said.

May looked irresolutely from her little sister to Mr. Atkinson, who was regarding the two with a smile. "Will you present the young lady?" he asked.

"It is my little sister, Rosalie," May told him, in a shamefaced way. "She has run away."

"Wunned away," repeated Rosalie, nodding her small head, complacently.

Mr. Atkinson laughed. The funny figure was too much for his gravity. He caught up the little one and swung her high in the air, so that one glove dropped off and her hat rose and fell like a flapping sail.

May seeing that Mr. Atkinson was not shocked, began to laugh too. "She has dressed up in mamma's things and has followed me," she explained. "That is mamma's garden hat and parasol, and those are her garden gloves that she

wears when she goes out to trim the bushes and to cut flowers, and the shawl she keeps downstairs to throw around her when it is too cool. I should think Rosy would be melted, it is so warm to-day." And, indeed, the little face was rather flushed. "I'll have to take her right back," she added.

"Don't be in a hurry," said Mr. Atkinson. "I'll take you back in the carriage." He stepped inside the door and touched an electric button. "Have the carriage around at once, the surrey," he said, to the servant who appeared, "and tell Abner to step over to Mr. Garland's and tell them there that their little girls are here with me. Now, dears, I'll have my call and we can take our time."

May had taken off Rosalie's shawl and hat, but she persistently clung to the gloves, gravely folding one hand upon the other, and viewing both admiringly. Mr. Atkinson took her in his lap, and then looked inquiringly at May. "Now then, my dear, you were going to ask me something."

May looked down. "Yes,—I—I"— She

paused; then she blurted out: "Are you very rich?"

Mr. Atkinson laughed. "I am not a pauper, but compared to some persons, I am not overburdened with wealth. I generally can find a good use for what I have."

"Oh!" May looked disappointed.

"Go on, dear Perhaps we can find a way to get what you want, if you will tell me what it is," he said, encouragingly.

May gained courage from the gentle voice and smile. "You see," she began, "it's about Mrs. Wills, and Eleanor said,—you know the lawn party? Well, she said you told her to invite just whom she chose, and she asked me and I thought —Will it cost very much?"

"Why?"

"Because, you know, if you wouldn't mind giving the money we wouldn't mind giving up the party, and then Mrs. Wills could have the money, and—and—you know Mrs. Wills, don't you?"

"The old woman who keeps the little shop over on Main street?"

"Yes, that's the one, and she's got a mortgage."

Mr. Atkinson nodded.

"And she can't get rid of it,"—as though it were some chronic disease,—"and she's getting poorer and poorer and some people"—May took a breath as the color flamed up into her face. "Some people owe her a lot of money and they won't pay her, so she got in debt for the things she sells, and she is old and queer and forgets things, so people go to the new shops and she'll lose her home. Oh dear, it must be dreadful to be old and poor, and not have any children or any one to look after you."

"It is very hard, very." Mr. Atkinson looked thoughtful. "That would be one way to help," he said, after a pause, "but I think we can do better. How would you like this plan? I meant to have the refreshments and the little favors all from the city. Now, suppose we satisfy ourselves with what Mrs. Wills can supply, and I buy from her stock what she has. Do you think that would do?"

"Oh, that's a lovely plan." May's eyes sparkled. "To be sure," she laughed, "some of the things are very stale, for they have been there

forever, and they are all stuck together, but Eleanor and I would eat the worst looking ones: You would, too, wouldn't you?"

Mr. Atkinson nodded, amusement in his eyes. "Yes, I promise not to touch the better things. Then will you and Eleanor go with me on Monday morning and pick out the toys we are to have for favors? There will be about twenty-five or thirty children, I believe, Eleanor and I counted, and we can make quite a hole in the old lady's stock, can't we?"

"I should think so. Oh, I shall just love that." May clasped her hands and Rosalie followed suit, the finger ends of her gloves flapping smartly as she did so.

Mr. Atkinson gave her a hug and went on. "You see it will not hurt the old lady's feelings if we help in that way, and I will promise to do what I can about the mortgage afterward."

May went up to him and put a timid hand on his arm. "I think you are very good, and I am very glad I came."

He put his arm around her. "I am very glad you came, too."

"And I think it will be the nicest thing in the world to go and buy all those things. I just love to spend money."

Mr. Atkinson laughed at this honest confession. "There's the carriage," he said. "We will stop by and pick up Eleanor and take a drive, if you like. Your mother will let the little one go, you think?"

"Oh, yes, but she must get her own hat. Does Rosy want to go riding with sister and Mr. Atkinson?"

Rosy looked up into Mr. Atkinson's face. "Get up, horsey," she said. Then, to her delight, she was carried out to the carriage, and with Eleanor they went for a long drive. There was much chattering over the plan which Mr. Atkinson had suggested, for Eleanor was delighted with it. "Won't it be fun," she said, "to go and pick out the things? I have always been crazy to see what was in some of those boxes, and now we will know." But when the three children were set down outside the Garland's gate and Mr. Atkinson had driven off, Eleanor turned to May and said: "I don't see how you had the grit to go up there and tell Mr. Atkinson when you didn't know him at all."

"I don't know, either," May replied, "but I had to do something, and I couldn't think of anything else."

That evening Mr. Atkinson called upon Mr. Garland and the two had quite a long talk. From the words dropped once in a while Eleanor knew they were talking about Mrs. Wills' mortgage, and she longed to know more. When Mr. Atkinson had gone, her father called her to him and said, as he put his arm around her: "I think we are going to get your friend Mrs. Wills out of her difficulty. Mr. Atkinson is much interested, and he is not a man to give a wordy sympathy; he generally follows up his words with deeds, and I shouldn't wonder if he were to take the mortgage himself, and then the only thing to do will be to see that Mrs. Wills gets her debts paid, and maybe the rest of us can manage to see her through. Every little helps, and we can each do his share."

Those words: "every little helps," kept ringing in May's ears and she determined to give up her ten cents that week, anyhow. "I wish I had something more," she thought. Then suddenly she grew very red in the face and the tears came

to her eyes. "I wish I hadn't thought of that," she said aloud. "I wish I hadn't. Oh, Suzette, I wish I hadn't." She ran down to the pasture where her lamb was lying under a tree, and led her out into a sheltered spot in the hollow. There she hugged her and kissed her, the tears falling on Suzette's woolly coat. "Oh, Suzette, my dear, I love you so," she said, "and yet I know you would bring a good price now, you are so big and strong and lovely. But mamma says you are too mischievous, and papa says you nibble, nibble everything, and that soon you will be jumping the fences; so Suzette, my dear Suzette, I shall have to let you go after a while, papa says, and so I will ask Mr. Snyder to take you. You will be happy in the place where you were born and where there are other sheep and lambs for you to play with." She put her head down on the lamb's back and wept afresh. "I hoped I could keep you. I hoped I could, but you will be happy, Suzette, and I will see you often. I will ask Mr. Snyder not to sell you. I don't believe he will do that, but I shall miss you so, you dear woolly darling. You are going to stay till after the garden party, for

you are invited, and I couldn't be a shepherdess unless I had a lamb to follow me; so dear, you will not have to miss that."

She led the lamb back to the pasture after a time, but the decision had been too much for her, and she was such a cross little girl the rest of the day that her mother had to reprove her more than once.

"What is the matter, May?" she asked. "You are so snappish to your little brother."

"Well, mamma, he is teasing me."

"Don't pay any attention to him then. That is the best way. I am sure it is not a hard thing to forgive a little mischief."

"I am tired of forgiving. I have to do it every day."

"But the Bible says 'seventy times seven.'"

May was silent a moment, then she asked, "How many times is seventy times seven, mamma?"

"It is four hundred and ninety."

"Then," said May, triumphantly, "I don't have to forgive Jack any more, for I know I have forgiven him once a day ever since he was born."

Her mother said nothing, but she wondered

what had so disturbed her little daughter, and it was not long before she found out, for May confided to her that night that she was going to give up her lamb.

Yet when she saw Mr. Snyder approaching that week, she felt inclined to run off, and hide, which was not the way she usually felt, for she was very fond of him and always was on the lookout for him. She did not run away this time, but did quite the opposite, for she led Suzette up to him and asked: "How much do you think my lamb is worth now, Mr. Snyder?"

He looked the lamb over, felt her woolly sides, and answered: "About five dollars, I should say. She is in fine trim and hasn't been clipped."

"That is a good deal," May said. "Well," she gave a long sigh. "I expect you will have to take her back again."

"Too troublesome?"

"No, not that, though she is a little mischief; but I could keep her longer, only I want the money."

Mr. Snyder threw back his head. "Ha, ha, ha! I thought you would get tired of your bargain."

"But I'm not, I'm not." May threw her arms around Suzette and burst into tears.

Mr. Snyder's laughter stopped on the instant. "Sho!" he exclaimed, "now that's too bad. I didn't go for to make you cry, my girl. Just tell me how it is."

"I don't want her to go, and oh, please don't sell her to any one else, Mr. Snyder. Please keep her and let her have a good time out there with the rest of the sheep in your pasture." May's tears still flowed.

"Sho!" Mr. Snyder found no other word.

"It's for Mrs. Wills. She is old and poor and half sick, and has nobody to love her, and I have so many people to love me, and I can help, for five dollars is really so very much and I don't believe that any one will give much more than that, but I want to do it."

Mr. Snyder turned away his head. "Bless my soul," he said, huskily. "No sirree, I'll not sell her to the President himself, and you shall come out and see her whenever you want to, and there's your five dollars." He handed out a bill.

"But I don't want her to go to-day." May

thrust back the money in alarm. "She is going to the lawn party. I don't want you to take her till next week."

"All right; just keep the cash. Now, come up here and tell me all about this." He lifted May up on the seat of the wagon and she poured forth her tale, to which he listened attentively. "H—m, h—m," he said, when she had finished. "Well, well, well, I'll have to look into this." And he drove away, leaving May both glad and sorry.

HER ILLNESS

CHAPTER VIII

Her Illness

THE two little girls, with Mr. Atkinson, visited Mrs. Wills' shop on Monday morning, and when they left the old lady's stock had grown so much less and her money-drawer so much fuller that she could hardly believe her eyes. It was indeed a queer-looking lot of goods which the purchasers carried away; antiquated toys, old-fashioned fancy-work, bags and purses quite out of date, candies that had grown sugary from standing, and cakes that were of no use except to feed the pets with, May declared. "They won't know they are stale," she said. "Snap and the pigeons, and Biddy and Buff, will like them just as well." So then and there these articles were bestowed upon her. They found, by poking into corners, some really pretty and odd things, and these with the ribbons Mrs. Wills could supply, were decked up and made into very attractive favors.

The story of the use to be made of these purchases had gone the rounds, and the children were mightily pleased, with very few exceptions. May and Eleanor were in high feather, and dressed themselves for the occasion, feeling entire satisfaction in the pleasure before them. May wore her pretty shepherdess dress, and when she appeared with her long crook and her little white lamb following her, she made quite a sensation. Suzette had been thoroughly soused and scrubbed, and had literally a "fleece as white as snow." Around her neck was a pink satin ribbon. "She looks just like a picture lamb," May declared. Eleanor wore a flower dress and appeared as a white daisy, with a petalled hat upon her fair head. There were many other flower dresses, pansies and roses and sunflowers, and with the boys as shepherds, as white moths or yellow butterflies, the lawn showed a bright and charming company.

There was music and feasting and fun in abundance, and the fact that there were no refreshments except such as Mrs. Wills' shop could furnish, in no way lessened the pleasure. Indeed, they all thought it a great joke to see a pile of sour-balls,

a basket of popcorn, or a stack of mint-sticks, and each child went home perfectly satisfied.

May had added her five dollars to the fund that was being raised for Mrs. Wills, whose friends had at last persuaded her that she must accept what was given cheerfully and lovingly for her comfort, and the members of the church, which the old lady had attended for so many years, had made her feel that it was a privilege to help one who had never withheld her mite. May felt very happy when she was told all this, but she dreaded the day when Suzette must leave her. "You will be going to school, so you will not miss her so much," her mother told her, "and you will have the satisfaction of knowing that she will be well taken care of."

"Yes, I know," May returned, "but I shall miss her just the same."

"But you are not sorry that you sold her."

"No, I'm very glad, but, mamma, I hope Mr. Snyder will come for her while I am at school, for I don't want to see her go."

Her mother said nothing, but she made up her mind that Mr. Snyder should be given a hint as to the best time to come for the lamb, and

that May should be spared the pain of seeing her taken.

But toward the close of the summer, and just as Mrs. Wills' affairs seemed in a promising state, the poor old woman fell ill. The worry and the losses so wore upon her that even when relief was in sight, she could bear up no longer, and the little shop was at last closed, much to the regret of the children to whom the tinkling bell over the door had become a familiar sound associated with moments of pleasure.

"What will she do when she gets well?" May asked. "She can't stay at the hospital forever, can she?"

"Not when she is well. We have thought of getting her into some good institution, but she cannot bear the idea. She still holds her little property, thanks to Mr. Atkinson, but it would be foolish for her to start up her business again, for she is not able to do much."

"I wish she had somebody to take care of her, or to live with her and keep the shop," said May. "I wish her little girl had lived, then she would do it, wouldn't she, mamma?"

"I hope so, but daughters cannot always leave their own homes, you know."

"I would, if I had a home, and you needed me."

"I hope I shall never need to ask you to do that."

The idea of her own mother, old and helpless, so wrought upon May that she leaned very close against her mother's chair, and put her hand over her eyes. "I don't like you even to talk about it," she said. "It most makes me cry."

Her mother laughed and assured her that she need not begin to worry over the matter yet, for, as far as she could see, she was in no danger of being in as desolate and lonely condition as poor old Mrs. Wills.

Yet the question of what was to become of the old lady was one that very often came up in more than one family, and at last was settled by Mr. Snyder, who had taken a lively interest in her affairs. He had taken her ducks and chickens and pigeons in charge, when she was taken ill, and had carried them out to his own place where they were faithfully looked after. "There is no reason why she couldn't come, too," he said, when he heard of

this latest difficulty. "There's plenty of room in our old house, and my wife will be glad to have her. We haven't any kinfolks to interfere with her, and I'm obliged to be away a good deal, so Almiry gets sort of lonesome; she'll like to have the old woman to talk to. She often says to me: 'Men folks are good enough when you want 'em, but once in a while a woman likes to have a woman around.' Yes, that's just what we'll do, and she needn't feel like she's taken in out of charity. We'll make her understand she's wanted. I reckon she's a first-rate hand with all kinds of critturs, ain't she?"

"I think she must be," Mrs. Garland told him. "You see she has kept all those chickens and ducks and pigeons in that little yard of hers."

"Yes, yes, that's so. I shouldn't wonder if she'd earn her board twice over. I'll just drop 'round by the hospital and have a talk with her." This he did without delay, and the result was that in another week Mrs. Wills went to her new home, leaving her affairs in Mr. Atkinson's hands; and so well did he manage that when all was settled up she had quite a tidy sum which would serve to

clothe her and provide her with necessities while she lived.

"She's queer as Dick's hat-band," Mr. Snyder said, "but Almiry gets along with her first-rate. They clip it off like they had been brought up together. She's right spry yet, though she's sort of loose in the upper story, and she's handy as they make 'em, and got the best disposition. As for poultry, why, she's just lifted that right off of Mrs. Snyder's shoulders. Don't have to bother over that a mite."

All this was good news to every one, and it seemed that Mrs. Wills had found the right niche.

"Suzette, is she well?" May never failed to ask, and the answer always was: "She's fresh as a daisy, and frisky as a kitten."

Yet May missed her pet, and as the cat and kitten found the stable a more attractive place than the house, and Snap was given to frequent outings upon his own account, she turned to her dolls, especially as Eleanor cared more for dolls than anything else.

The latter part of the summer there came a week or two when May had to be housed, for that

very disagreeable, but in this case not dangerous, visitor, the mumps arrived, and so she was shut up indoors where she fretted a good deal. Kind Mr. Snyder was quite concerned when he heard of it, and at first, in his usual hospitable way, insisted that she should be sent out to his farm, but Mrs. Garland declared that she could not let her little daughter leave her when she was not well.

"I suppose she can't have visitors, has to be kept from the rest of the children, I dare say. Mumps ain't often dangerous, but they are terrible unpleasant. Have to live on spoon-vittles all the time."

He drove off, but the next day he returned. "I just stopped by," he told Mrs. Garland. "My wife sent in a little mess of something for the invalid and some company for her. Thought it might amuse her. It's a queer kind of crittur, but my wife sets lots of store by it. It was hers when she was a little gal, and she says to tell your May that Miss Silence has come for a little visit." And he handed down a large old-fashioned doll with rows of black curls around her head, and with staring eyes. She was dressed in the fashion

of nearly fifty years ago, in hooped skirt, and what Mrs. Snyder termed a "flat" with a fall of lace around the brim and a "mantilla." Mrs. Garland declared her a real curiosity and promised that May should take good care of her, and would send her home when the mumps had disappeared. "It was certainly very kind of Mrs. Snyder to think of sending her," she said, "and this delicious cream, too."

May, looking very pale, and with much swollen jaws, tried to laugh when she saw Silence. "Isn't she funny, mamma? and what a nice name, Silence, for she can't talk. Come here, my dear," and she held out her hands for the doll. "I wish Eleanor could see her. Won't you tell Jack to go and ask her to come to the garden under my window, and I will hold up Silence where she can see her."

Every day Eleanor came over and by signs and notes carried on a conversation with May, so that she did not feel altogether forsaken. Yet it was a trial for an active little girl to be shut up in one room, and not to be able to eat anything but soft food, and to have her face hurt her when she

laughed, and to feel hot and uncomfortable. But she bore it very well, considering that she was not a very patient person, and, with the help of Silence, managed to get through the days pretty well. Silence was such a big creature, larger than any of May's own dolls, and her mother gave her some little out-grown baby clothes of Rosalie's which just fitted Silence, so that May had many a good play by herself with this big doll. She was shipwrecked on a lonely island; she was a light-house keeper; she was a pioneer going to the great west; she was a dozen different things, and Mrs. Snyder could have sent nothing which would have amused the little prisoner more than this same round-eyed Silence.

One other person shared May's plays with her during this time, and that was Bubbles, for the little darkey insisted that she had had the mumps "bofe sides," and was, as Mrs. Garland declared, an immune, so Mrs. Dallas very kindly allowed Bubbles to come over every afternoon to bear May company, and though Eleanor was on this account, doubly bereft, she contented herself with Rock, or would sometimes take her pony and go

for her little cousin, Jessie Murdoch, and take her to drive, for Jessie was much more of a favorite than Olive.

Bubbles was great fun; she had a lively imagination and had been so long a playmate of Eleanor's that she could suggest all sorts of amusements, and could entertain May by the hour with accounts of her exploits and Eleanor's. She was willing, too, to accept any character and was quite as ready to be a savage as a sea-captain, as the occasion demanded.

She appeared one afternoon all smiles, as was her wont, and began with: "Les play we gwine er go to—wha' dat place whar dey grows o'anges an' all dem things?"

"Florida?" suggested May.

"No, miss, dat ain't zackly hit."

"California then."

"Dat de identicous place. Sposin' we goes off thar an' gits dem o'anges an' grapes an' p'ars. My, but dey is mighty good, dey fa'r make mah mouth watah." Bubbles was always ready to select a play in which she could introduce something good to eat.

"But I can't eat any of those things," May protested. "I've got the mumps."

Bubbles looked at her with scorn. "Law, Miss May, no yuh hain't, not when yuh makes believe. Yuh ain't gwine ter Californy really, an' I reckons de kin' o' o'anges we-alls will git won't hurt yuh none."

May agreed that this was quite true, and the play proceeded.

"What I gwine be? Nuss gal?" asked Bubbles, brightly, "or is I one o' dem cullud gemmans on de cyars what takes de baigs. I kin start out nuss gal, an' kin win' up potah. Das de way Miss Dimple an' me gen'ally plays hit."

"All right," May responded, "that will do very well. I'll call you—what shall I call you?"

"Miss Dimple call me Hetty when I de gal, an' Sam when I de potah."

"Then I will do that, too. Bring me the baby, Hetty, we will start for California at once."

"Law, Miss May, dat ain't de way. Yuh is 'bleedged ter talk 'bout hit fo' a long time; fus' yuh is gwine, an' den yuh isn't, an' den yuh has ter pack de trunks an' de baigs an' put up de

"We Will Start for California at Once"

lunch. De play won't las' no time ef yuh starts off dat-a-way."

"Oh, very well. I am thinking of taking a trip to California, Hetty, but I haven't decided about it, but I think you had better get the baby's clothes together and let me look them over." This was highly satisfactory as a beginning, and Bubbles obeyed with alacrity.

In this play she was entirely at home, and acted her double part with great success. One minute she was holding the baby and the next she was making up the sleeping berth or shouting out in a lusty voice: "Last call fo' dinnah," and would step back into her position as nurse, while May went forward to the dining car. She even took a third character when they arrived in California, for she instantly became the owner of a large orange grove, and plucked imaginary fruit from curtain poles or gas brackets with the utmost ease, describing the quality with such gusto that May declared. "You really give me a pain in my mumps, Bubbles, for I feel as if I were actually eating oranges."

"Hi!" exclaimed Bubbles at this point, "dey

somebody callin' down dere, Miss May. Hit Miss Dimple, I be boun'." She went to the window, raised it and looked out. To be sure, there was Eleanor below.

"Let down the basket, Bubbles," she called. "Here is something mamma sent in." And Bubbles hastened to obey.

"What are you playing?" asked Eleanor, wistfully. "I wish I could come in."

"We playin' dat game yuh an' me plays on rainy days; dat game when we goes to Californy. We done got there now, but de o'anges mek Miss May's face ache, so we ain't gwine stay long."

"Well, I must go back," returned Eleanor. "Give what's in the basket to Miss May with mamma's love, and tell her I wish she'd hurry and get well."

Bubbles drew up the basket which was used to pull up or let down the various notes which Eleanor and May wrote to each other, and when it was opened by Bubbles, acting as waiter, she exclaimed: "My! dat looks good. I know Mis' Dallas made dat her ve'y own se'f."

"What is it?" May asked, bringing Silence over to see.

"Two o' dem Charley Rushes," replied Bubbles. "Yuh kin eat dose, Miss May, dey is as sof' as anythin', dey jes' nothin' but sponge cake an' whup cream."

"Yes, I can eat those. Mamma gave me some the other day, but you must have some, too, Bubbles."

"No, miss, I ain' gwine tek none. I hed de scrapins o' de pans dis mawin', and reckon I'll git some o' dish yer to-morrer."

"Well, then, go down in the kitchen and ask Martha to give you something; tell her I say so; that we are traveling. You see we are on our way back now, Bubbles, and we want something for the dining car."

Bubbles disappeared and soon came back with a large slice of bread and molasses, which she proceeded to devour with great satisfaction, while May managed by slow degrees to despatch one Charlotte Russe.

The next day Eleanor came dancing under the window. It was a warm morning, and since May

was better, she could have the window open. "May, May," she cried, "papa and Rock are going to put up a telephone for us. Won't that be fine? Then we can talk back and forth from my room to yours any time we want to."

May agreed that it was very fine, and Mr. Dallas soon appeared at her door.

"I was told to come up," he said. "It seems you have grown very fat since I saw you, Miss May."

"Please don't make me laugh, Mr. Dallas," May begged. "It does hurt so to laugh."

"Very well, I will be very sober," he replied. "I will go right to work and put up this talking machine. Where do you want it? Over here by the window?"

"Is that where Eleanor has hers?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's where I'll have my end of it." She watched with great interest the setting up of the little machine, and when it was ready Mr. Dallas told her that Eleanor was waiting to hear the first message.

So May turned the knob which rang a little bell, and cried: "Hallo, Eleanor!"

"Hallo!" came faintly back.

"Isn't this fine?"

"Yes, isn't it?"

"How are you?"

"I'm well, how are you?"

"Better, thank you. Good-bye."

"Good-bye."

Mr. Dallas stood by, a smile on his face. It did not seem a very important conversation, but before the day was over the girls had used their telephone many times, and it served to amuse and entertain them both long after May was well.

HER SCHOOL-DAYS

CHAPTER IX

Her School-days

By the time school had opened May was quite well again and ready to start off with Eleanor. There was a new teacher this year, for Miss Reese, who had taught the school for several years, was married, and the children were all alert to see who was to take her place.

"I did like Miss Reese so much," sighed Eleanor, "but I am so glad she is married to Dr. Sullivan, because I am very, very fond of him. I don't know Miss Ellis at all, and it takes a long time to get used to anyone new."

It was, however, a fortunate thing for May that Eleanor was her good friend, for she did not have to enter the school an entire stranger to the girls, and, moreover, the others were quite as uncertain of the teacher as she was herself.

It was not very comfortable for Miss Ellis to feel twenty pairs of critical eyes fixed upon her,

and to know that twenty tongues would soon discuss her from the way she arranged her hair to the way she tied her shoes, but she took her place in a grave and dignified manner that first morning, and everything ran smoothly. May was a bright scholar, and was in the same classes as Eleanor, though the latter was a year older. Olive Murdoch, too, was very studious and generally was in the lead. She was quite ready now to take her place as the model of the school, and assumed a little air of importance that was not lost upon May.

Miss Ellis examined the girls one by one, and to Olive's surprise she found May assigned to the same grade as herself. "That little thing!" she said to Janet Forrester, her special friend, "why, she can't keep up with us. I'll soon show her that."

"Oh, well," said Janet, "Miss Ellis is a new teacher, and doesn't know, at first. She will put her back as soon as she finds out."

This reached May's ears, and put her on her mettle. She would study, and if there was any virtue in application she would not be put back.

So from the first she worked away industriously and was always well prepared.

"I don't see how you do it," Eleanor said to her. "I do manage to keep up, but you are ahead of me in some things." She looked at May admiringly. It was well to have one's best friend such a good student if one could not be herself.

Under Miss Ellis' teaching the school was divided into more classes than Miss Reese had found advisable, and Miss Ellis herself soon found that it would be better to re-arrange it. She watched the girls very carefully and was very strict, so that she might be sure of making no mistakes. She was a nervous, conscientious girl, not so full of life, and a little sadder and sterner than Miss Reese, so that though the children stood more in awe of her, they did not find her so lovable. She was a stranger, too, and in consequence they felt less at home with her than with Miss Reese, who lived in the town.

May's mother had said to her: "Remember, daughter, that Miss Ellis is a stranger and should receive every consideration. You must always

try to think how you would feel under the same circumstances."

"I'm a stranger, too," May returned, "and I know just how she does feel. I am going to be as good as gold, mamma, and I will study hard. You will help me, won't you?"

"I will, indeed." And because of this help, May was always able to go to school with her lessons well in her mind, and could recite them with perfect confidence.

Nevertheless, there were many temptations to slight them, and one Saturday in particular, May almost made up her mind to leave a certain study only half prepared. Eleanor came in with the news that Mr. Snyder had invited them all out to go nutting, and was to send his wagon in for as many of Miss Ellis' scholars as could go.

May looked at the book she held in her hand as Eleanor stood telling her of the frolic. "Oh, dear, if I had only studied this yesterday instead of leaving it till to-day," she said. "I ought to have done it, but, you know, we got so interested playing that I said I could easily put it off till to-day, for I thought then I was going to

have plenty of time. What did you do about yours?"

"Oh, you know mine is easy. I am not up to you in that book, and besides, we are doing some of the work we had last year."

May sighed. For a moment she was tempted to set the work aside. "I'd only be put back with Eleanor," she thought, "if I did miss, and it wouldn't be any disgrace. I do want awfully to go," she said.

"Oh, then come along. What is the use of bothering over the old lessons, anyhow? You are way ahead of the other girls of your age, and it won't make any difference if you do miss this once, and maybe she won't put you back," it being perfectly understood that the *she* was Miss Ellis.

May turned over the pages of her book. "Are you going to be gone all day?"

"All day. Won't it be fun? We're going to have a real country dinner, a sort of picnic dinner, Mr. Snyder says, doughnuts, and sandwiches and pie and apples and such things."

"Oh, dear," again sighed May. "Isn't it dreadful when your conscience says 'Stay' and

your's want to says 'Go'? I'll have to stay, Eleanor. Please, please, don't beg me any more, for I am just holding myself, and I almost can't help going."

"I am so very, very sorry," said Eleanor, kissing her. "I'm going to tell Mr. Snyder just why you didn't come, and I will bring you half my nuts. We are going to take Jack, anyhow. I wish Rock were here to go," for Rock had gone home the week when his own school began. "Good-bye, you dear thing," said Eleanor, as she ran off, "I hate to leave you here."

May watched her disappear, heard Jack's shout of delight, saw the wagon drive up, and listened to the children all chattering and laughing as they made room for the two additions to the crowd; then she took up her book, but the tears would splash down. She felt so lonely; all day long she would be obliged to wander around by herself, for, even after the lessons were learned, she would have no one to play with her, and it would be a dreary afternoon.

She tried to put her mind upon her lesson, but her thoughts would go wandering off to the woods.

Lem, Mr. Snyder's hired man, was driving; she had seen his good honest face there in the front of the wagon. She could hear him say: "Get up, Pete! G'lang, Morg!" She could hear the laughter and fun, and could see them all, in her mind's eye, running over the leaf-covered ground. She put her head down and fairly sobbed.

But presently she felt her mother's face close to hers. "Why, my little girl, did you want to go so very, very much? Couldn't the lessons have waited? You might have done them this evening, although I suppose you would have been too tired; or you might have gotten up early Monday morning, and perhaps have prepared them in time."

"Perhaps I could have," May returned, wistfully, and looking with wet eyes at the book; "but it is really a very hard lesson, and it will take me ever and ever so long to learn it. Besides, you know, you and papa will be out this evening and I couldn't have you to help me."

"True, I had forgotten that. Well, I can help you now. I will leave my door open all morning, for I shall be in my room sewing, and all you

have to do is to run in whenever you come to a hard part."

"I wouldn't mind so much," May told her, "but I shall be alone all day, for there won't be a soul for me to play with."

"There is Rosy."

"She is so little, and she can't play as I like to."

"Perhaps we can find something pleasant to do, after a while. Often when we are not looking for a pleasure it comes, and you don't know yet how the day will turn out. So, cheer up, and work away."

May bent over her book with better heart, and did indeed find many hard knots to be picked out, but her mother could explain very clearly, and was always exceedingly patient, so after a time the lesson was conquered.

"Now the others," said Mrs. Garland. "We'll get them all done up in a jiffy, and then you will be free. It is eleven o'clock now. You certainly did have a real tug with those examples."

"The rest aren't so hard," May told her. "I think I can easily get them by myself." She set

to work valiantly, but in a short time her mother heard an exclamation, "Oh, my!"

"What is it, dear?" came from Mrs. Garland's room.

"Why, mamma, this is awfully hard, and we all thought it was so easy. I'll have to get you to lend me your dear wise head again, mamma." She came in and stood by her mother's side and softly patted her cheek.

"This isn't so easy for a little girl," said her mother, as she took the book and looked over the page, "but I think we can conquer it. Suppose you sit right down here by me, and we'll go over it together."

This May did, and at last the book was shut with a snap. "There, that's done. I understand it perfectly, mamma. You are a dear to help me. Do you know some of the girls never get a bit of help at home, and I don't see how they get along without. It's lovely to have a mamma who knows so much. Oh, there's something stopped at the door. I hear wheels." She went to the window. "Mamma," she cried, "it's Mr. Snyder, it's Mr. Snyder! Do you believe he

could have come for me? Oh, may I go if he wants me to?"

"Why, of course you may, and I hope that is what he has come for. It is just twelve o'clock, so the day is but half gone."

May ran to the stairs in time to hear Mr. Snyder's hearty voice say: "Where's little May? I'd like a word with her ma."

"Here I am! Here I am!" cried May. "Come, mamma," and she ran down-stairs as fast as she could scamper.

"Heigho, little one!" came from Mr. Snyder, standing in the doorway. "Got to keep an eye on my horse; he is one of your regular goers, and won't stand long. Ma home?"

"Yes, Mr. Snyder, she is coming right away."

"Reckon she'll let me take you back with me?"

"Oh, I am sure she will."

"Then hurry up. We can make it by dinner-time, for Mrs. Snyder said she'd not have everything ready before one o'clock, and seeing as you folks in town don't get your dinners as early as we do, I reckon that's time enough. Run, get your hat. Good morning, Mrs. Garland, you'll

let me take this young lady back with me, won't you?"

"I shall be delighted to let her go. I hope you didn't make this trip especially for her."

"Well, not altogether. I sent Lem in this morning, but he's a dumb crittur about some things, always is forgetting something, and he had his head so full of bringing out the load of children that he couldn't think of anything else. So, as there was a little matter I wanted attended to, I thought I might as well come in myself and pick up your little gal on the way out." He did not say that the errand might easily have been put off. "Them lessons learned?" he asked as May appeared.

"Yes, Mr. Snyder, but I only finished them a little while ago."

"Then I'm in the nick of time. We'll make it easy in an hour, with this horse and the light buggy. Duke is a Jim Dandy for getting over the ground."

May, with great alacrity, settled herself in the buggy, and they set off at a pace which clearly showed that they would soon get to the farmhouse.

Eleanor had been as good as her word, and had gone to Mr. Snyder at the first opportunity. "May is as sorry as can be that she could not come," she told the good man, "but she would stay and study her lessons. I think she is very good to do it. Not another girl has stayed for that, and she does so love to come out here."

"Pshaw! too bad," Mr. Snyder had replied. "I'd rather have you and her than the whole posse. What time do you reckon she'll get through? It won't take all day, will it?"

"Oh, if she goes right to work I should think she could get through in a couple of hours."

Mr. Snyder nodded and looked at his watch. "Don't say nothing to the rest," he said. "I reckon you all can get along without me for a while; if you want anything, ask Mrs. Snyder or Lem. I am going to harness up Duke."

"Oh, do you mean to drive in and get May, Mr. Snyder. Do you really?"

"That's about the size of it. I'll get mother to put off dinner a little, and Duke will bring us out in a jiffy."

"Oh, Mr. Snyder, you are a darling! I could hug you for that."

"I don't see anything in the way of it," Mr. Snyder had replied, and, forthwith, Eleanor had thrown her arms around his neck and had given him almost as tight a hug as he did her.

It was just one o'clock when Eleanor, who was on the lookout, saw May's red jacket in the distance. "Here she comes," she sang out. "There is a horse and buggy coming as fast as can be, and I know it is Mr. Snyder and May. It's May, Jack. Isn't that lovely?"

Jack danced up and down. "That's bang up!" he cried. He had been quite distressed that his sister was to lose all this fun, and now, with Eleanor, he ran to the gate, for the horse and buggy had turned into the lane and was coming nearer and nearer at a spanking pace. Just as it drew up the dinner-bell rang loudly and the children came trooping from every direction. Then such a good time as they did have, and how the piles of sandwiches and cold chicken and biscuits and turnovers and doughnuts disappeared. It kept Mrs. Wills and Mrs. Snyder both busy sup-

plying the empty plates, while Mr. Snyder made merry with them all. May on one side and Eleanor on the other, pulled wish-bones with him, and counted apple seeds for him, and laughed at his jokes, so that he declared he had not had such a good time "in a coon's age."

May thought she ought to tell the girls how hard the lessons were, so she said to those in her special class: "We have such hard, hard lessons for Monday. Have you all studied them?"

"No, we haven't," they exclaimed, with one accord, and Olive added with a little toss of her head: "Probably they do seem hard to you. The rest of us don't have to break our necks trying to keep up with a class too far ahead for us."

May bit her lip and turned away. "That's all the thanks I got," she said to Eleanor afterward. But this did not interfere with her fun, and there was probably not a girl who enjoyed herself so much or who carried home her store of nuts with a better feeling of satisfaction.

It was a very tired, sleepy crowd which reached the town about dark, and it is safe to say that not one of them was able to study a lesson that night.

"I shall have to learn mine on Monday morning," said Olive, "I am so sleepy that I can't keep my eyes open. Will you waken me early, mamma?"

"You should be able to waken yourself," Mrs. Murdoch replied. "Set the alarm. I cannot be disturbed early, it always gives me headache."

So Olive set the clock, heard it go off with a whirr at six, but was so sleepy that she turned over for another forty winks, and at last woke with a start to find it was nearly breakfast time, and when she could, at last, look at her lessons she realized that they were, as May had said, very hard.

She was rather taken aback, therefore, when she went to school, to hear Miss Ellis say: "I have purposely given you hard lessons, for to-day, girls, because I want to give you a little examination this morning, principally upon the day's lessons, and I shall then reorganize the classes, making but two of the three which now contain the smallest number of girls. Those who succeed in passing the examination will go in the higher class, and those who fail will have to be put back into the lower one."

The girls looked at each other in consternation. "She might have told us," they grumbled.

Miss Ellis heard this. "I purposely did not tell you, for I want to learn who are the really diligent pupils, and who are not. A lesson specially prepared for examination would give me no evidence of the general application of the scholar, and I specially want to learn who are the conscientious students, who do not slight any of their work."

So the examination went on. Every girl in May's class, except herself, failed, and all were put back, while she triumphantly took her place with the older girls.

Miss Ellis looked at her with a faint smile. "You are the youngest of them all," she said, "and I hardly think you can keep up with girls so much older than yonrself. Do you think you can?"

"I would like to try, Miss Ellis."

Miss Ellis reflected. "To be sure, the girls are reviewing just now, and you seem to know your subject so well, that perhaps you can go on; but if you find it too hard, you must not mind going

back, for you would still be doing all that could possibly be expected of a little girl of your age."

So May was promoted, and it would not have been human if she had not cast a triumphant glance at Olive, who was angry and sullen over her defeat, and, from this time out, sought to annoy Miss Ellis in every way that she possibly could. In this she was aided and abetted by Janet Forrester, who was continually talking about partiality, and of girls so smart that they didn't know where they belonged. Miss Ellis may not have been altogether fair in her methods, but she thought she was giving them all a chance, and certainly, in this case, it was not May who did not deserve her promotion.

HER VISIT

CHAPTER X

Her Visit

One day just before Thanksgiving, May came home from school and found her mother with a letter in her hand. "I have an invitation for you, May," she said.

May threw down her books. "Oh, mamma, who sent it? Is it a party?"

"No, it is from your grandma. She wants to know if you can come spend Thanksgiving with her. You know, we have invited a friend of your papa's here to spend the day, and I think it is almost too much of an undertaking to go so far just for one day, anyhow; but as your Uncle Rob will not be at home this year, there will not be any one to make it seem like a holiday for grandpa and grandma."

"And may I go?"

"Do you want to?"

"Of course I do, mamma, but I would like to be here, too."

"I am afraid you cannot do both," her mother replied, smiling, "and so you must make up your mind which you will take."

May pondered over the question for a few minutes. "I think I will go, mamma, for you have two children left, and grandpa and grandma will be so lonely without any one."

"That is as I hoped you would decide, and I am sure your papa will consent if we can find some one to go as far as the city with you."

"Can't papa take me?"

"I am afraid not. However, we will see. If you are really going, we will have to have Miss Jewett here to sew for you."

"Oh, and will you get me a new frock, mamma?"

"Yes, perhaps two of them. You will have to have them anyhow, and I can get them as well now as later. You have outgrown all your last winter's frocks, and you really have nothing that will do to take away from home."

"I am glad," May retured. "I do like to have new clothes."

So, when it was decided that she was really to go, she and her mother went down town to make these important purchases. There were only two or three dry-goods shops of any importance in the town, and, at both of these, May was now well known. She liked very much to go to them with her mother, for the clerks always consulted her and talked to her pleasantly. "They are not a bit like they are in the city," she said to her mother, "for no one takes any notice of you there, and here they know all about you."

"Some persons don't consider that an advantage," her mother returned, "but I must say, that I do not mind the being a big frog in a little puddle."

May was not quite sure that she understood just what her mother meant, but she did know that she liked to sit perched upon a high stool and watch her mother select materials. She watched with great interest as Mr. Campbell unrolled pieces of goods.

A pretty challie with rosebuds scattered over a white ground was the first choice. May thought this the most beautiful thing she had ever seen.

"You will hardly need it now," her mother told her, "but there will be occasion later on when you will want to wear it, and I may as well get it now, while I can, for it may be gone soon."

Then came a red cashmere, and last, a pretty bright plaid. This particularly pleased May. "I like that one so much the best," she told her mother. "May I have that?"

"Yes. It is my choice, too, and will make you a nice serviceable frock. Now we will go to Miss Mann's and see about a hat." This, too, was a matter of much discussion, and at last, a simple affair with bunches of ribbon to trim it with, was chosen, and May went home well satisfied.

Eleanor took much interest in all this, and when the last article was laid in May's trunk, she was there to see the packing completed. "You will come over and visit Pinky and Pat, won't you?" said May, "and Snap, too. They will all miss me, I know. I wish you were going, Eleanor."

"I wish so, too;" Eleanor turned her head aside to hide a laugh.

"Just think, this time to-morrow I shall be there," said May.

"We are going by the eight o'clock train, you know. Isn't it fine that Miss Ellis can take me? She is going to the city to do some shopping and to see some friends, and it just happened right."

"I'll be over to-morrow morning by the time you are ready to go," Eleanor said, as she went off. "Don't you dare to start till I come."

"I won't," May promised. What was her surprise the next morning when Eleanor appeared to see her equipped for traveling.

"Why, Eleanor," she exclaimed, "where are you going?"

"I am going to the city, too. I am going to stay with Aunt Dora for the holidays. Isn't it lovely? I only knew it day before yesterday, and I could hardly keep from telling you. I thought it would be such a nice surprise. Rock and Uncle Heath will meet me. Mamma had to hurry so to get me ready, for Miss Jewett was sewing for you, but she managed, and she is going to send what isn't finished. I shall not need such a great deal for only five days, you know."

"I am so glad you are going," May told her, "though I shall only have you on the train going to the city."

"I wish you could come up to Uncle Heath's with me and stay till to-morrow."

"Oh, I couldn't, because papa sent a telegram to grandma to tell her that I would be up on the one o'clock train, and she will be there to meet me. Miss Ellis is going to put me on the train and tell the conductor to be sure to see that I get off at Lakeside."

"Aren't you afraid to go by yourself?"

"No-o, I don't think so. I know it so well, and I couldn't make a mistake."

After many good-byes and kisses and embraces, they set off and found their journey much shorter than it would have seemed if either had been in the company of only an older person. As the cars pulled into the station, Eleanor was on the lookout for her uncle and Rock. "There they are," she cried; "I see Uncle Heath; he is coming through the gate."

"I see Rock," exclaimed May; "he is standing there inside the railing."

Mr. Dallas soon caught sight of his niece and lifted her and May down, then gave his hand to Miss Ellis. Eleanor ran through the gate and was immediately seized by Rock. "Come right along," he said; "Mamma is at home waiting for us."

"I must say good-bye to Miss Ellis and May, first," Eleanor told him.

"Why, I didn't know May was with you," Rock returned. "Wouldn't it be jolly if she could come, too." He went over to greet May and to urge her to come home with Eleanor.

"I have to take the train for Lakeside," May told him.

"But that doesn't go for an hour or longer. I will go and get a time-table and we will see."

"We could bring you back in time," Mr. Dallas said.

May looked at Miss Ellis who shook her head. "I promised faithfully that I would see you on the train myself." She looked at her watch. "There is an hour and a half to wait, it is true, but we can find some way to pass the time. I think we would better not run any risks."

"It will keep you so long from your shopping," May said. "I don't like to have you wait all that time, Miss Ellis."

"I am in no great hurry. You know I am going to be here for several days, and the shopping can wait."

"I think I can be relied upon to see that May gets off on time," said Mr. Dallis, "and I am sure it will be all right if you say to my friend, Garland, that you gave this young lady over into my hands. An hour and a half is a long time for you to wait."

Miss Ellis thought the matter over, and at last consented to leave May in Mr. Dallas' charge, and he saw her to the car which would take her down town. When he returned to the children it was to say: "Now, I tell you what we will do: we will go and get some ice cream; I know it is never too cold for chicks like you to eat it, and while you are consuming that I will go and get a carriage and we will take a little drive, and get back here in time for the train. That will be better than sitting in the station."

May thought this a very agreeable plan, and

they all went to the restaurant of the station, where Mr. Dallas left the children to eat their ice cream.

When he came back he brought two boxes of candy, one for May and one for Eleanor, and then, having finished their cream, they followed him to the side of the station where the cabs and carriages stood. "Did you ever take a ride in an automobile?" Mr. Dallas asked May.

"No, I never did," she told him.

"Should you like to?"

"Oh, yes, so much."

"Very well, then up we go." He lifted her in, and Eleanor beside her, and off they started.

Surely this was an unexpected treat. She would have this to tell Jack about. How he would enjoy the ride. But the pleasure was soon over, for it was nearing the time for her to start, and back they must roll to the station. There she bade her friends good-bye, and, after giving strict charges to the conductor to look after her, Mr. Dallas left her established in a seat by the window, her box of candy in her lap, and a pile of illustrated papers by her side.

It was not a very long ride to Lakeside, and May was promptly helped off the train by the conductor. "You are all right, now," he told her, as he swung back again upon the platform of the car.

The little girl stood still and looked around. She was only one of two or three passengers, and the others walked rapidly toward their several destinations. May walked slowly to the waiting-room, for she saw no one from her grandfather's there on hand to meet her. Probably they were a little late. She sat down and waited. The ticket office was closed, and the agent had gone to his dinner. There was not a soul anywhere about the place, and the child sat there patiently watching the hands of the clock. At last this became a monotonous employment, and she concluded that she would walk up the road and meet the carriage, which had in some way been detained, she was sure.

She started bravely out, but her box of candy and her papers were hard to carry, and she did not find it easy to get along with them. It was a crisp, cool November day, and fortunately the roads were in good condition, so the little girl was

able to travel along at a smart gait, and after having gone for about a mile, she saw the familiar chimneys of her grandfather's house looming up behind the trees. Then she saw some one ahead of her walking along toward the house. Surely it was her grandfather. She hurried on, and presently she caught sight of the man's face. Her grandfather wore a full beard, and this man had a clean shaven face. May stood still for a moment in surprise. He was so like and yet so unlike, but she ran forward to overtake him, and when she reached his side she looked up at him to say: "Aren't you my grandpa?"

The old gentleman paused in astonishment. "Why, daughter, where did you drop from? I didn't expect to see you for a couple of hours yet."

"And I didn't know you at first, grandpa. I thought you must be some one else, 'for my grandpa has a white beard,' I said."

He laughed. "So he did have, but he concluded to get rid of it last summer, and he rather thinks that he will not bother with it again. But tell me, where is your grandma?"

"Why, isn't she here?"

"No, she expected that you would meet her in town, and come out with her on the four o'clock train. Didn't your father get my telegram?"

"No, grandpa, I don't think he did."

"What time did you leave home?"

"A little before eight. We took the eight o'clock train."

"That's it, then. You just missed it, of course. I supposed you would not leave before nine, and avoid the long wait in the city."

"I had to come then, because that was the train Miss Ellis and Eleanor were going to take, and papa and mamma wanted to have me come with them."

"I see. Well there's no great harm done. Your grandma thought you oughtn't to come by yourself even from the city, and as she had an errand in town to-day, she thought you might meet her at the station and come up with her. I hope your parents will not worry because of my telegram. We will drive to the station at Lakeside, when we have had dinner, and I will telegraph them that you are here safe and sound, and I can

telephone to your grandma so she will not worry. Did you walk all the way from Lakeside, you poor little tot?"

"Yes, I thought I would walk till I met you coming in the carriage."

"Well, well, well, and nobody came at all? You must have thought we were neglecting our little visitor. Dinner is ready, I am sure, so come right in, and make yourself at home. I am glad enough I do not have to eat my meal alone."

This pleasant ending to an anxious hour made May very comfortable, and she sat down to enjoy her dinner, feeling that she was glad she had undertaken to come from Lakeside alone. "I might have been sitting there yet," she told her grandfather.

"So you might, and would have sat there till your grandma came. Never mind, it is all over now." He piled up her plate with all the good things he could find, and bade the maid bring her so many of the freshly baked Thanksgiving dainties, that she could not begin to eat them all.

This was a quiet old country place, but May loved it, and had spent a part of every summer

here ever since she was born, so that she felt perfectly at home. The little room which she always occupied was next to her grandmother's, and on this day it was warm from a fire newly built in the wood stove. May always liked the smell of the burning wood, and she liked the queer closets on each side of the mantel, and the deep windows. Everything was so neat and so quiet, and she tiptoed about as if it would not do to break in on the stillness.

She ran down at her grandpa's call and found him ready with the carriage. "We will go to the station first, and then we will take a little drive and come back that way for your grandma," he told her. "I have a little business to attend to about a mile or so up the crossroad, and it will take me just about long enough."

They set off and the short afternoon was nearly over when they drew up for a second time by the station. "There's the train now. I hear it whistle," May said.

"Then we are just in time, and I will go around to the baggage-room to get your trunk, while you go out and meet grandma."

May obeyed, and stood watching the train as it came thundering up. In a moment she saw a dainty little old lady step from it, and she ran forward to meet her. "Why, my little Maydie," her grandma cried, "you did forestall me this time, didn't you? I am glad enough to see you here safe and sound. Where is your grandpa?"

"He is around seeing about my trunk, grandma."

"Then we will go and get in the carriage; it is getting too cold to stand out now."

"Were you surprised to get grandpa's message?" May asked.

"I was greatly relieved to know you were safe, though we ought to have thought that maybe you would take an early train."

They drove home in the dusk, and found a roaring fire on the hearth. It was very cozy, May thought, and though she had no young companions, and found it hard sometimes to keep still when her grandpa was reading or writing, there was always some quiet sort of play for her to enjoy. Grandma would play backgammon or checkers with her, or would let her have the pieces of chess, so beautifully carved, and with

those she could entertain herself by the hour. Then there was a big old book full of colored pictures, illustrating Bible stories, and this was not less interesting that her father had looked at it, time after time, when he was a little boy.

Thanksgiving Day was cold and dreary, but grandma had provided a store of good things, and May gave a large entertainment to the chessmen and a pair of little dancers, which slowly revolved upon the sounding-board of the old piano. In the evening, grandma brought out a stereoscope, which was something that May always loved to look through, and they had cakes and taffy and nuts and cider, eating them by the open fire, while grandma and grandpa told stories of when they were little.

So the time passed very quickly, and it did not seem long before May was saying good-bye, and, in a very little while she was at home again, with Eleanor and Jack, recounting her experiences and hearing theirs. Then came school again with all its little interests, and its bothers, and Thanksgiving holidays became a part of the past, and Christmas was the next thing to expect.

HER TEACHER

CHAPTER XI

Her Teacher

"I'ts all very well for you to stand by, Miss Ellis," said Olive one day, when May insisted that the girls had no right to act badly, and make themselves disagreeable to their teacher. "You are her pet, and, of course, you will stand up for her."

"And I don't care how I act," Janet put in. "She's nothing but a school-teacher, anyway. She has to work for her living, and who cares what she thinks?"

May looked at Janet in amazement. "Why, I think a teacher is next to a minister," she said.

"Humph!" Janet gave her head a toss. "I think you have funny notions. I'd like to see my mother being intimate with any one who has to work for a living. She has better friends than that kind of people."

May went home and told her mother of this

conversation. Mrs. Garland listened to her daughter's indignant account. "There are unfortunately some persons who think that way," she remarked. "They may not all express themselves quite so plainly as Janet does, but they really think so, and by those who respect what money cannot bring—intellect and gentility and moral worth, such persons are called snobs. Miss Ellis is a lady in every sense of the word, and I hope my little girl will never, never do anything that will cause her to think that she is ill-bred. Everything you say or do is a comment upon your own rearing, and if you were to be snobbish, persons would be very likely to say: 'The Garlands cannot be accustomed to setting a good example to their children, or they would show that they have been well-bred.' So, if you want your parents to be well thought of, you must act accordingly."

May pondered over this, but had little opportunity of showing her opinion one way or the other, for Janet and Olive avoided her and clung together, while May and Eleanor did the same.

One morning early, not long before Christmas,

"She's Nothing but a School Teacher, Anyway"

May arrived at school before any one else had come. There had always stood in the window two or three pretty flowering plants which some of the girls had given Miss Ellis. When May came in, she saw that these had been thrown down and broken to pieces, and that over Miss Ellis' desk was running a stream of ink, which had soaked through the crevices and was dripping into the drawer. May was aghast at the sight, and stood wondering how it had occurred, when Miss Ellis came in. Her face wore an anxious, worried look of late, but she smiled as she saw who it was that had arrived so early. She boarded not far away from the school-room, which was unlocked and kept in order by the family who lived in the lower part of the building.

"Oh, Miss Ellis," May began, "isn't this too bad? I wonder how it happened."

"My dear little plants!" Miss Ellis exclaimed. "I am so sorry that they are broken. I was so fond of them, and one of them looked as if it might bloom by Christmas."

"I don't see how it happened," May repeated. "I came very early, for I left one of my books,

and I wanted to look over those last examples again, and when I came in it was just as you see it. Let me help you to gather them up; maybe they are not so much hurt. Mr. Hale keeps flower-pots, and I can run down and get some new ones. Shall I?"

"If you will, my dear, I shall be much obliged."

May ran down and returned, carrying three new flower-pots. As she entered the room, she saw Miss Ellis had gone to her desk. She was holding something before her and the tears were running down her cheeks. "Oh, Miss Ellis!" May stopped short. She had never seen her teacher show so much feeling, and she had always thought of her as rather a cold person. "She isn't cosy and cuddly like Miss Reese," Eleanor had said. "There's a sort of stand-off way about her." But now May went up shyly and put her arm around her teacher's neck. "Oh, Miss Ellis," she said, "did the ink spoil anything?"

"It has spoiled several things, but nothing that could not be replaced, except this." She held out a photograph of a little girl somewhat younger than May. "This picture is of my one little sis-

ter, who died just after this was taken, and it is all I have of her. I used to keep it in this drawer here at school, because it comforted me sometimes to look at it, and to feel that, because of her, I should try to love all my little scholars. She loved her big sister so dearly, my little Evelyn. My mother died just after my little sister was born, and she always seemed more than a sister to me. My father died a year after she did."

May's arm crept closer. Miss Ellis had never given so much confidence to any of her other scholars. "And haven't you any one else?" the child asked, earnestly. "No other sisters or brothers?"

"No others."

"Oh, I am so sorry." A little timid kiss reached Miss Ellis' cheek. "Do you think it is really spoiled? Miss Ellis, won't you let me take it to papa. I remember that he had a photograph that something happened to, and he took it to a man in the city, and he did something, I don't know exactly what, but anyhow, now papa has a lovely picture. It was one of mamma that was taken before she was married, and papa liked it

better than any that he has of her. May I take this and ask him about it?"

"Why, my dear, I don't like to trouble your father."

"But he'd like to do it. I know he would. Please, Miss Ellis." And Miss Ellis consented, first carefully wiping off the ink and putting the photograph in a fresh envelope.

Presently there could be heard the arriving scholars trooping up the stairs. Miss Ellis stooped and kissed May hastily. "Thank you, dear child, you have been a great comfort to me this morning." And May went to her seat with a very warm feeling toward her teacher. She did not remember having seen Miss Ellis kiss any of the girls, and she felt that it was truly, as her teacher had said, that she had been a real comfort.

No reference was made to the trick played, and when the girls came, in the flower-pots stood a-row, the ink-stains were wiped away, and all was in order.

"I'm so glad I came early," thought May, as she caught Olive and Janet casting knowing glances at one another. "I know they did it."

She was full of the story of the morning's doings when she went home. "I do feel so sorry for Miss Ellis," she told her mother. "None of the girls like her as well as they did Miss Reese, and some of them are not nice to her at all. Olive and Janet are perfectly hateful." Then she told of the condition of affairs when she arrived in the school-room that morning. "And I'm perfectly certain Olive and Janet did it," she ended by saying.

"You have no right to insist upon that," Mrs. Garland said, gently. "Of course you may suspect that they did, but you have no proof, and so I would tell no one your suspicions."

"Not even Eleanor?"

"Not even Eleanor. It is always better to say nothing at all, unless you can say kind things of another. We will tell papa and let it end there. Now, I have been thinking of a plan. I should like you to give Miss Ellis a Christmas present, for she has been a faithful teacher, and has no relatives and few friends to make her holiday pleasures. I have no doubt but that your papa can have this photograph copied and enlarged a

little, so as to make an artistic picture. Wouldn't that be a nice Christmas gift for Miss Ellis?"

"Oh, mamma, perfectly lovely. I am so glad you thought of it. I am delighted. Are you sure it can be done?"

"Yes, I am quite sure."

"What else can we do for Miss Ellis? It must be dreadful to have to work hard and have nobody to love you when you go home," May's arm stole around her mother's neck, "and have all the girls trying to make themselves hateful to you. What will Miss Ellis do when the holidays come, mamma?"

"I don't know, perhaps she will go to the city, to some of her friends there, although I believe she has no very intimate ones nearer than New York, somewhere, in Buffalo, I think, she has an aunt and cousins, but it would be a long expensive journey for her to take, so, no doubt, she will remain where she is."

"Is she very poor, mamma?"

"No, but she had many expenses during the long illness of her father, and was obliged to borrow money to meet them. She is trying to pay

her debt, and like an honorable woman, will not indulge herself in any luxuries until she has paid what she owes."

"Mamma." May was twisting the string of her apron around her finger and was very thoughtful.

"Yes, dear."

"Wouldn't it be nice to ask Miss Ellis to come here and spend the holidays?"

"Do you think so?"

"Yes. Don't you?"

"I do, indeed, and I was hoping that you would think of that very thing, for Mrs. Dallas and I were talking it over yesterday, and agreed that each of us would invite Miss Ellis for a week's visit during the holidays."

"I'm so glad. Oh, mamma, I love you for that. Won't you please let her come here for Christmas Day so we can give her the picture and let her hang up her stocking? Won't you, please, mamma?"

Mrs. Garland laughed. "We'll see about that, but you mustn't say anything till it is quite settled."

"No, I won't, but I'm just dying to. Please ask her right away, mamma. Can't you?"

"I didn't think of doing it to-day, but upon the whole, I believe it would be a good thing to do, for I am sure she is grieving over the accident to her picture. I think I will wait till we have shown it to papa and see what he says, and then, perhaps, we can go over and call upon her this evening and ask her then."

"I know something I would like better than that."

"What is it?"

"Why, write a little note and say: 'Please, Miss Ellis, won't you come over and take tea with us this evening?' and I'll take the note and then Mrs. Dallas can come over after tea, and I will know all about it as soon as you do."

"That is one word for Miss Ellis and two for yourself, but I think I should like that very much."

"And I may take the note?"

"Yes, if you want to."

"Good! I will go right away. Hurry up, mamma, and write it. I am going to get Eleanor

to go with me. Shall I tell Mrs. Dallas that Miss Ellis is coming, and ask her if she will come over after tea?"

"I think it would be better to wait till you hear what Miss Ellis says, and then you may tell Mrs. Dallas, if you like."

May set off with a very satisfied face. All her feeling of loyalty was roused, and she said very soberly to her little friend: "Eleanor, I believe Miss Ellis is like a nut. She seems awfully hard outside, but she is very sweet and good inside."

Eleanor laughed. "That is a funny idea. What makes you say that?"

"She kissed me this morning."

"May Garland! She didn't, did she?"

"She really did, and Eleanor, she had a darling little sister and she died. Wasn't it sad? And she hasn't any one in the whole wide world to love her, unless we do, and I am going to love her as hard as I can. Say you will, too."

"Yes, I will, too."

"I'm just crazy to tell you something, but I can't. At least, not to-day. Maybe I can to-morrow."

Of course, Eleanor begged to be told what it was, but May kept her word and wouldn't tell.

They found Miss Ellis at home. Her face looked very sad, and her dark eyes had a mournful expression, but she smiled as she saw the two little girls, and then she looked really pretty.

May handed her the note. "Please say you will come," she said, clasping her hands in her eagerness.

Miss Ellis read the little note, and said brightly: "I shall be delighted to come, tell your mother."

"And please come early."

"No, don't go early." Eleanor possessed herself of one of Miss Ellis' hands. "Is it too cold to take a drive, dear Miss Ellis? Won't you go with me, and I'll come around with Spice in about fifteen minutes."

"Won't I be rather a big passenger for your little pony cart?"

"No, indeed. Mamma often goes with me. Spice is little, but he is very strong, and if you don't mind his being little he wont mind your being big."

Miss Ellis laughed. "Very well, then. With such an assurance I ought to be satisfied."

"And you will be ready in a quarter of an hour?"

"Yes, on the minute."

"There now," said Eleanor, as they hastened toward home, "I am glad I thought of that, May, because she'll have a good appetite for her supper. Nothing makes you so hungry as riding in the cold."

May went home and reported, and about dusk Miss Ellis appeared, a fine color in her usually pale cheeks and a smile on her lips. She was very bright and almost gay that evening, and charmed the children by singing and playing for them. She was a good musician and had a rich sweet voice. May watched eagerly for Mrs. Dallas' appearance. "I don't want to go to bed," she whispered to her, "till I know whether Miss Ellis will really come for Christmas. Please, Mrs. Dallas, let us have her for Christmas Day. I have a very particular reason for wanting her then."

Mrs. Dallas smiled and said that if that were so

that she would yield any right she might have, and would begin the New Year with Miss Ellis, if she were willing to come.

Miss Ellis' lip trembled as May's eager eyes watched for her answer to the invitation. "Oh, do come," she begged.

"Do you really want me so much?" she asked, almost wistfully.

"Yes, so very, very much. Don't we, mamma?"

"I can think of nothing that would make me happier," Miss Ellis said. "Christmas is such a sad day for me, and to be in a house where there are merry children will be the greatest happiness I could ask."

So it was all settled, and May laid great plans. Mr. Garland carried the photograph to the city and reported that it would come out all right, and that the copy would be ready in time. Eleanor and May decided that the stockings must hold as many funny things as possible, and they hunted the town over for absurdities, and likewise contrived not a few themselves, spending their Saturdays in the playhouse, and shutting out all intruders. Any one passing might have heard

frequent bursts of laughter and exclamations of: "How ridiculous!" or "How funny!"

"I wonder where Miss Ellis will spend her Christmas," said Janet Forrester, at recess, one day.

"I can tell you," replied May; "she is going to spend one-half with us and one-half with Eleanor Dallas' mamma."

Janet stared. "Well," she exclaimed "Did you hear that, Olive? They will have a merry Christmas with that old sour face around."

May got very red. "She hasn't a sour face. She looks lovely sometimes. My papa said he had no idea that she was so handsome when he saw her the other night at our house. I reckon if you had lost your father and mother, and your only darling little sister, you'd be sad, too. And if some hateful somebodies had spilled ink all over the only picture you had of your dearest little sister, I reckon you'd look more than sad, Janet Forrester."

Janet cast a startled look at Olive as May walked away, digging her heels angrily into the ground as she went. "Do you suppose she knows?" she whispered.

"No, of course not," Olive replied. "It is all very well to try to get on the right side of Miss Sour-Face, and I think it is a very mean way for May's mother and Cousin Florence Dallas to do. Of course they invited her to their houses so she will be nice to their daughters. My mother wouldn't do it." And it is quite safe to say that Mrs. Murdoch would not.

Olive lost no opportunity of giving May and Eleanor to understand that she felt herself put upon by their attention to Miss Ellis, and declared that it was easy to see why it was.

"She's just the hatefulest girl I ever saw," said May, to her mother. "Did you ever hear of such a thing, mamma? I wish she would go to some other school. She is the one that keeps the girls stirred up against Miss Ellis. I don't believe even Janet would be so hateful if it were not for Olive." May was almost in tears.

"Never mind, my dear," her mother said, soothingly. "So long as one's own conscience is clear, it is all right. Don't think about Olive in the matter. Her opinion is not worth anything at all. Think about what a good time we are going to

have at Christmas, and remember that it is the season of peace and good-will. Olive makes her own misery by her envious, suspicious nature, and is really to be pitied, for she doesn't enjoy life half as much as you and Eleanor do."

So the days went on, till Christmas week came with its bustle and flurry; its smell of spicy bakings in the kitchen and its piney odors in the other parts of the house. Mr. Snyder brought in such a lot of trailing green, big branches of holly, and a fine tapering Christmas tree. He brought, too, a big plump turkey, which, hanging out of the second story window, was viewed by Jack and May with much agreeable anticipation. Miss Ellis arrived in due time, and was so helpful and expert in hanging greens, dressing the tree, and in a hundred and one ways that Mrs. Garland declared that she had never felt so little wearied at Christmas Eve. Then came the hanging of the stockings, and the tying up of gifts. The children made many mysterious errands to their mother's room, and went to bed filled with high hopes.

HER HOLIDAYS

CHAPTER XII

Her Holidays

It was a cold, snappy Christmas. May and Jack were up betimes to get their stockings, and in their little flannel wrappers to stand in the hall and sing their Christmas carol outside their mother's door. Then, after waking everybody up by their shouts of "Merry Christmas," they scampered back to bed to cuddle under the covers, and, half by the dim light and half by feeling, to discover the contents of their stockings.

"It is getting light," cried May, after a while. "Let's get dressed, Jack, and go down. It must be nearly time." Yet they were down before any one else. How could grown people be so deliberate when there was that beautiful tree ready to light, and those presents all in array to be taken possession of by those for whom they were intended?

"Let's just open the door a crack and poke our noses in," Jack suggested. "It is pitch dark in there, and we can't see a thing, but we can smell the tree."

This they proceeded to do, drawing long breaths of satisfaction. But in the midst of this slight indulgence of their curiosity, their mother appeared. "Why, my dears, what are you doing? Surely, you are not peeping."

"No, mamma," they cried in a breath, and dancing up and down in anticipation. "We are only sniffing. We can't see a thing. Is papa ready? Are we going in now? Is Miss Ellis coming?"

"She is on her way down, and here is papa with Rosalie." The dancing became more animated, and finally they all filed into the darkened room, May holding fast to Miss Ellis' hand. Then the taper was touched to the candles upon the tree, and presently it stood in all its glory with the presents in sight. Next Mr. and Mrs. Garland proceeded to distribute these, but probably not one of them was more appreciated than May's gift to Miss Ellis.

May handed it shyly to her teacher. "I hope you will like it, Miss Ellis; I think it is lovely," she said, candidly.

Miss Ellis opened it, and when the little pictured face smiled up at her, she gave a cry of surprise and delight, then she put her head down on May's shoulder and fairly sobbed, to May's great distress.

"Oh, please don't, Miss Ellis," she begged. "We love you, indeed we do."

Miss Ellis raised her head and smiled through her tears. "My dear, my dear; this is so like. What a beautiful Christmas you are giving me. I am very naughty to spoil it with tears, but I couldn't help it, for it was such a surprise. I promise you I won't do so any more. I can never, never tell you how I thank you. There is nothing in all the world I would rather have."

Jack stood off watching all this going on. He felt that the occasion was a little beyond him, but he bravely did his little best. "My! Miss Ellis, but you look fine in that red dress," he said.

"Oh," exclaimed May, "we were so busy with the presents that we didn't notice. Miss Ellis

hasn't on that sober black dress any more. I am so glad. You do look lovely in red," she added, admiringly. "Did you have that made specially for Christmas?"

"Especially for Christmas, and it is the first bit of color I have worn for four years. Now, I must go and tell your mother and father how I thank them for my beautiful, beautiful presents, and especially for the picture that your papa had made."

But here breakfast was announced, and with May on one side and Jack on the other, Miss Ellis was escorted to the table.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Garland were greatly pleased that the picture had turned out so well. "I was sure that Hall could do it, if any one could," Mr. Garland said. "By the way," he went on, turning to his wife, "I forgot to tell you that I have invited some one to dinner to-day; an old friend of mine who has been in the Philippines for the past six months. It is queer how things come about," he added, reflectively. "I was in at Hall's to see about the picture when the Major came in; he recognized the photograph at once.

'Why, that is little Evelyn Ellis,' he said, and then he asked all about you, Miss Ellis, and we had quite a talk. I haven't seen him for years, but we were college mates when I was a Soph and he was a Fresh, though he left after the first year to go to West Point."

Miss Ellis' head was bent over her plate, and she did not say a word in reply.

"He thought you would remember him," Mr. Garland went on.

"You haven't told us his name yet," Mrs. Garland remarked, laughing, "so, how can Miss Ellis be expected to recognize him by the very indefinite title of Major?"

"Oh." Mr. Garland laughed, too. "It's Leonard. Major Joe. Leonard."

The color had flashed up into Miss Ellis' face, but now she was very pale. "Yes, I remember him," she said, faintly.

"Nice a fellow as ever breathed," Mr. Garland went on. "I thought we'd have enough turkey to go around, if Jack doesn't eat it all up. You'll give the Major a drumstick, won't you, Jack? He doesn't have turkey every Christ-

mas, and the drumsticks will remind him of the army."

"Yes, sirree; I'll give 'em both to him," Jack returned, "then I won't have to eat 'em myself." At which every one laughed.

"I'm so glad you have on that pretty dress," said May, confidentially, to Miss Ellis. "You do look so lovely in it. Aren't you glad the Major is coming? I am. I love to have a whole lot of company on Christmas day."

The Major arrived in due time. May and Miss Ellis had just come in from church, so the red dress was not in evidence, but May, lingering on the porch to speak to Snap, saw the tall gentleman step up. "Is this where Mr. John Garland lives?" he asked.

"Yes," May replied. "Are you the Major?"

"That is what they call me. Are you Mr. Garland's daughter?"

"Yes, I am May Garland. Come right in, and I will go and tell papa. I think he must have missed you, for he said he was going to the station to meet you." She ushered him into the hall, where stood Miss Ellis removing her gloves.

She stood before the open grate fire, but turned as she heard voices. The cold walk had given a pretty color to her cheeks, and May thought she looked very handsome.

"Miss Ellis, here's the Major," said the little girl, cheerfully.

The Major stopped short. "Katherine!" he exclaimed.

A lovely smile broke over Miss Ellis' face. "Joe," she said, holding out both hands. "I am glad to see you."

"He called her Katherine, and he was so surprised to see her here," said May, in telling her mother, "and she called him Joe. They must know each other very well."

They were a very merry company at dinner when the Major insisted upon having the drumstick which Miss Ellis told him Jack had promised to give up to him, and it was to Miss Ellis that the wish-bone fell, and when Mr. Garland put it over the door it was the Major who deliberately walked under it, though why Miss Ellis should blush so, and Mr. Garland should laugh and clap the Major on the back and say: "Good

for you, Joe, my boy; that took courage;" the children could not see, for it looked a very easy matter to walk under a wish-bone.

Jack, in particular, could not understand it. "What's the reason it takes such a lot of courage?" he asked Miss Ellis.

"You'll have to ask the Major," she replied, blushing again.

"Was it hard?" Jack asked, looking puzzled. "I am going to try." But the Major took down the wish-bone, and said he meant to keep it, and that Jack might have a chance of learning how hard it was some day.

So the time went happily for them all. The Major went so far as to say that it was the happiest day of his life, and Jack wondered whether it was because he liked them all so much, or whether it was because he was not used to such a good dinner.

"He didn't have but one Christmas gift," the little fellow remarked the next day, "and he didn't tell me what that was." Then every one laughed, just why Jack could not see. "He told me a fine story about Manila," he informed them, "and he's going to tell me some more next time he comes.

I hope he'll come often, don't you, Miss Ellis? I think he's a Jim Dandy."

Miss Ellis did not seem to have any answer, but Jack was quite sure they had not seen the last of the Major.

But the holidays which began so happily ended very sadly for them all, for Rosalie was taken very ill with pneumonia, and a great sadness hung over the household. There was one day in particular that May never forgot, a day when the house was so quiet and every one spoke in whispers, and when Mrs. Dallas came over and said to Jack and May that they must go over to her house and stay, May looked up with quivering lips to ask: "Is she doing to die, Mrs. Dallas?"

"We can only hope, my dear," Mrs. Dallas answered, gently. "She is very ill and must be kept very quiet, but we hope she will get well."

May ran to Eleanor in a passion of tears. "Oh, Eleanor, Eleanor," she sobbed, "dear little Rosalie is so ill, and what shall I do? What shall I do? I can't bear to think that I may never see her again. She is so dear and sweet, and I am cross to her sometimes. Oh, Eleanor!"

Eleanor had not words to comfort her, and Bubbles, who dearly loved Rosalie, cried with May. But here Sylvy came to cheer them.

"Don' fret, Miss May," she said, "dat chile ain' gwine be took yet, I jus' sho de Lord won' snatch huh. Dis is de tu'n, an' ef she get th'ough dis all right she gwine get well, yuh hyar me, now."

May looked up through her tears at Sylvy's kind face, and her sorrowful little heart was lightened a little, but still it was a long and sad day for her. The children could do little to entertain themselves, though Eleanor did read aloud from her most amusing books, and they tried to get absorbed in their plays, but they watched and listened for news from the other house all the while. Mrs. Dallas came over late in the afternoon, and told May and Jack that they must remain all night, and that by morning the doctor would probably be able to tell what they might expect.

"Miss Ellis is such a comfort to your mother," Mrs. Dallas told May. "No sister could do more. I am so very glad she is there."

It was Miss Ellis herself who wakened May the

next morning. "I have come to tell you that the baby is really better," she said. "The doctor thinks with care that she may get well, though, of course, there is still great danger, but I think it is very good news to bring you that he gives any encouragement at all."

"And can I go home?" May asked, eagerly.

"Can't you content yourself here for to-day?"

"I want to see mamma and papa," May replied, with tears in her eyes. These dear ones seemed doubly dear when this trouble was upon them.

Miss Ellis considered the matter. "I think you might come home and eat breakfast with them, and then come back again. I think your mamma and papa would be very glad to see you, and I know you will not make a noise."

"May Jack come, too? I will tell him that he must be as still as a mouse, and I know he will be."

"Yes, he may come, too."

May hugged Miss Ellis very closely. "I am so glad you are here," she whispered, gratefully. "You are so good."

Miss Ellis leaned down and kissed her. "If

you only knew, my dear, what you all have done for me, you would know that I feel that nothing in the world that I can do would repay you for all your kindness. I nursed my own little sister, you know, and so I feel that I know something about the care of little sick babies." She kissed May again, and left her to come over to breakfast a little later.

After this, Jack and May breakfasted at home for a week, and at the end of that time the two children could go home to stay. But even then it was a very weak, pale, little Rosalie who tried to smile at them the first time they were allowed to see her; and when she tried to say in her faint little voice: "May, Zack," May could not stand it, but slipped out of the room to throw herself in Miss Ellis' arms in a torrent of tears. "She looks so sick," she sobbed. "Will she ever get well?"

"She is much, much better, and will soon get strong," Miss Ellis assured her. "Now I am going in to stay with her, and let your mamma come out for a while. Do you remember that school begins to-morrow?"

"Oh, so it does. Oh, dear, the holidays haven't

been very nice, have they? Except Christmas day; that was lovely. And you didn't get your visit to Mrs. Dallas after all. You stayed here and helped mamma all the time. You won't go back to your boarding-house right away, will you, Miss Ellis?"

"What would you say if I told you that I did not mean to go at all, at least, not for the present?"

"I would be very glad. Are you really going to stay?"

"So your papa and mamma say. They declare that they will not let me, and so what am I to do about it?"

"And I will not let you either." May flung her arms around her.

"Then it would seem that I must stay."

"Don't you want to?"

"I want to, very, very much."

"Then it is all right."

"Here comes your mamma; she will tell you more about it. I must go to Rosy, and let your mamma take a breath of air. She has not been out for days."

"Are you going to walk, mamma?" May asked. "May I go with you?"

"If you like, yes. I am not going very far."

It was not till they had started that May asked, "Is Miss Ellis really going to stay here with us?"

"I hope so," Mrs. Garland replied. "She has been such a great, great comfort to us in this hour of trial; so quietly helpful, so gentle and kind."

"And just to think that the girls called her cross and sour."

"She was only sad and unhappy."

"And will she be happy now? Will it be because we make her happy?"

"I hope it will be partly that, but I do not think it will be altogether owing to us," Mrs. Garland replied, smiling.

"Then who? Oh, mamma, is it the Major?" May stood still to ask.

"You have guessed it. Yes, it is the Major. She has known him a long time, and would have married him several years ago, but she would not leave her father. There was some sort of quarrel, and soon after, the Major was ordered away. Then there was some trouble about a letter, and

Major Leonard did not know where to find Miss Ellis when he got back, so you see, after all, the accident to the photograph turned out a blessing in disguise. Yet, if my little girl had not yielded to a kindly impulse, and had not wanted to show her sympathy and friendship, Miss Ellis might never have met her Major again, and we should never have learned to love her so well. Indeed, I think we owe our dear little Rosy's safety to her, for on one dreadful night, when I, in my inexperience, did not know what to do, and your papa had gone for the doctor, our darling baby might have died but for the prompt act of Miss Ellis, who knew just what to do."

May gave a long sigh of satisfaction. "She won't care now what the girls say, and she won't have to go from school to that lonely boarding place. Is she going to stay with us till she gets married?"

"Yes, I hope she will."

"And the Major is a friend of papa's. Isn't it all like a story, mamma?"

"I think it really is, but the real stories are very often to be found close to us."

"Will they be married very soon?"

"I think in the summer sometime, and then the marriage will take place from our own home."

"Oh, mamma, how lovely. May I go and tell Eleanor?"

"Yes, if you like. I think it is no secret, now." And May ran off highly delighted to have this great piece of news to tell.

It was quite proudly that she started off to school in company with Miss Ellis when the holidays were over. Now that her teacher was a member of the family, she felt that she had a better claim upon her than any one else, and with Eleanor, she fought her battles valiantly, so that, in time, those who did not take sides with their teacher had become a very small number. Miss Ellis seemed so much brighter and cherrier, too, that no doubt this was one cause of her stronger influence over her girls. She was not less exacting, but her smiles were more frequent, and the girls grew to love her more and more.

So when the summer came and the Major arrived and bore his bride away, there were many wishful eyes that looked after her, yet of them all

none were so full of tears as May's. But the long summer days were before her, and there were Snap and Pat and Pinky, the latter with a new family of kittens, and Suzette a mother sheep, all to be thought of and visited; therefore, when May and Eleanor, with their arms around each other, turned back from looking after the carriage, which took the Major and his wife to the station, though their eyes were still wet, they smiled at each other, and Eleanor said: "I'm glad there are no Majors to come and take everybody away. I'm going to the stable to see the new kittens."

"And to-morrow I am going to see Suzette," said May.